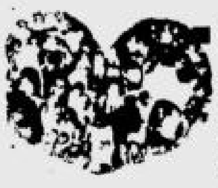

■ 2bU! / D1

Summer lovin': Dedicated to mothers who taught us to love

■ News / A6

Withdrawal of Erap support still hounds Reyes in confirmation hearing

■ News / A2

Labor groups warn government of 'war' over wages

■ Across / A17

Court orders hotel in Puerto Princesa to pay P5M in electric bills

■ Motoring / C1

Over 2 road 'terrorists' spotted every minute

Local Reds accuse China of abandoning Maoist cause

LOCAL communist rebels, turning from allies to critics of China, yesterday said that Beijing's shift to a capitalist economy had undermined revolutionary movements in Southeast Asia.

The 8,000-member New People's Army, armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, drew ideological inspiration from

LOCAL/ A8

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Ilocos Sur cop chief sacked over shooting of newsman

By Luige A. del Puerto and Armand N. Nocum

IN TERMS of the usual pace of police action regarding crime, this one was fast.

Four days after radio commentator Nestor Seguismundo was shot and wounded in Ilocos Sur, Philippine National Police Director General

ILOCOS/ A8

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

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website: www.inq7.net

Sacrifice

EDITORIAL

WORLD Press Freedom was marked yesterday, with journalists dressed in black and lighting torches, and a curious, but generally indifferent, public passing them by. If yesterday we wrote about how journalists deserve to earn a decent income, the kind that affords them not only health and nutrition but also allows them to work honorably and virtuously in the face of temptation, today we write about journalism and our broader society, about journalism and its importance to our readers.

Today, our words are in red, the color of love. This is an emotion that, perhaps, readers do not identify with journalists, particularly the hard-hitting kind, but it is the primary motivation of any writer, and specifically, of journalists. Journalism is both a profession and a craft; it is a living, but also a duty; it is a calling that has as its primary motivation the love of facts, of truth, of the people. If the truth shall set us free, the truth requires its defenders, exponents and, yes, even its martyrs.

SACRIFICE/ A14

RP most murderous place for journalists

STOP KILLING JOURNALISTS!
FREEDO
STOP THE KIL

REM ZAMORA

CARRYING THE TORCH for press freedom, journalists form a human chain on Tuesday night at Timog corner Morato Avenue in Quezon City to protest the unabated, largely unsolved murders in their ranks. Reporters Without Borders has called on the UN to send an investigating team here.

Int'l media groups hit gov't for inaction

NEW YORK—The Philippines has been the most murderous country for journalists, followed by Iraq, Colombia, Bangladesh and Russia, since the year 2000, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said in a report on Monday.

The CPJ, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to defending press freedom worldwide, also said the majority of journalists killed on duty during that period did not die in crossfires or while covering dangerous assignments, but were hunted down and killed in retaliation for their work.

It said 121 of the 190 journalists who died while on assignment were killed in that manner. In 85 percent of those slayings, the killers have gone unpunished, the CPJ said in the report, which was based on five years of death records beginning on Jan. 1, 2000.

The Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontieres (Reporters Without Borders, or RSF) strongly criticized the Philippine government for allowing the killing of journal-

RP MOST/ A8

Survey says the poor becoming desperate

FOR MANY Filipinos, these are desperate times that require desperate measures.

More people now think that the poor will turn to stealing or support efforts to overthrow the government to get out of poverty, according to a private polling firm.

In a survey conducted in March, Pulse Asia Inc. also found that fewer Filipinos were thinking that the "hopeless poor" would likely take positive measures like looking for jobs in other countries or resorting to prayer.

Pulse Asia said yesterday that about a fifth (21 percent) of those surveyed said that a poor person was likely to steal or engage in an illegal livelihood, while a 10th (12 percent) said that person would support those seeking to oust the government.

This represented a change of perception since October 2004 when 16 percent of those surveyed thought the poor were likely to steal and only 5 percent said the poor would join efforts to topple the government, according to Ana Maria L. Tabunda, Pulse Asia executive director.

In a statement, Tabunda said 26 percent of those surveyed in March thought the poor would look for

SURVEY/ A21

Group says 88% of taxes went to pay debt

A MULTISECTORAL group supporting calls to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo slammed her administration for resorting to various tax measures to raise funds meant primarily to service the country's foreign debt.

In a three-page paper, the Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomiya (KME) said the government spent at least 88 percent of the total tax collection in 2003 for debt servicing, up from 72.64 percent in 2002 and 56.93 percent in 2001.

Still, the foreign debt continued to surge because of a "vicious cycle," said Bishops Julio Xavier Labayen, Deogracias Iñiguez and Antonio Tobias, who all belong to the multisectoral group.

In 1998, for instance, the foreign debt stood at $49.1 billion even if the country shelled out $5.4 billion in debt payments that year, the KME said. The foreign debt supposedly rose from $17.7 billion in 1980 to $40 billion in 1994.

"Because the Philippine economy has long been reduced to debt

GROUP/ A4

JOAN BONDOC

'MARTYR OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM.' Former parishioners and colleagues of Fr. Rhoel Gallardo, who was beheaded by the Abu Sayyaf while in captivity, are starting to call him a modern-day saint on his fifth death anniversary on Tuesday at the Himlayang Filipino in Tandang Sora, Quezon City. Fr. Bernardo Blanco, himself a former Abu Sayyaf hostage, celebrates the memorial Mass. *(Story on Page A2.)*

5 more bishops back call to oust GMA

By Christian V. Esguerra, Philip C. Tubeza and Christine O. Avendaño

FIVE MORE Catholic bishops are supporting calls to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Like three others who had gone public with their position, the five bishops have been attending meetings of the Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomiya (KME), the multisectoral group spearheading the effort, the group's chair Jimmy Regalario said yesterday.

"They are also convinced that there should be a change in the system," Regalario told the INQUIRER. "They know that President Arroyo is the epitome of the rotten system."

But unlike Bishops Julio Xavier Labayen, Deogracias Iñiguez and Antonio Tobias, the five bishops have yet to come out for fear of being "isolated" within the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), Regalario said.

The supposed fear might not be exactly unfounded, considering the CBCP's culture of caution and secrecy. Its outgoing president, Archbishop Fernando Capalla of Davao, is seen as being deeply "pro-GMA."

With their reputation, the five bishops were expected to further add pressure on the Arroyo administration should they publicly endorse a change in government.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye

5 MORE/ A4

'Jueteng' lords dish out ₱13B in bribes–bishop

By Philip C. Tubeza

ABOUT 14 to 15 "jueteng" lords dish out P13 billion in payoffs every year to government officials, from the national level all the way down to the barangays, a senior Church official said yesterday.

Appearing at a congressional hearing, Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz submitted a sealed, white envelop containing the names of the gambling lords but asked the lawmakers to withhold publication of the list.

Tension rose when Rep. Mikey Arroyo, the President's son, questioned Cruz's findings. But the bishop stood his ground.

Cruz appeared before the House committee on public order and security a little over a week after the INQUIRER published a report quoting a senior police official as saying that three relatives of a top government official were raking in millions of pesos a month in jueteng payoffs.

"Definitely, jueteng is bigger now compared to the past administration," Cruz told reporters after the committee hearing.

"The collection remains centralized but they have new collectors. Some of these collectors are even bigger than those before."

JUETENG/ A21

IBA ANG GUSTO!

Senior cop not keen on promotion

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE PROMOTION is apparently his for the taking but a top Philippine National Police official claims that Chief Supt. Rowland Albano is reluctant to grab it.

"Albano wants to go to Region 5. You ask him why," the official, who

SENIOR/ A21

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao including Palawan will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers & thunderstorms. The rest of Luzon will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers & thunderstorms in the afternoon or evening.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: ERIKA SARMIENTO, PDI RESEARCH/05/04/05

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Labor warns of 'war' over wages

By Gil C. Cabacungan and Jerome Aning

MALACAÑANG yesterday cautioned workers against squeezing businesses by demanding a large pay raise, warning it could lead to massive lay-offs and factory closures.

But this was met with an equally grim warning from militant workers groups which said government should prepare for "an unstoppable class war" between laborers and employers if their demand for a P125 across-the-board minimum wage hike is not granted.

"We have a make or break situation here . . . Give in to workers' demand for P 125 or brace themselves for an earth-shaking workers' revolt that would teach them the lessons of a lifetime," said Fernando Hicap, national chair of the Pamalakaya fisherfolk alliance.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President wanted the regional wage boards to find a "middle ground" that was both fair to workers without causing undue harm to enterprises.

"We need to balance the interest of workers and management because if the management is pushed to the wall on the wage hike issue, it is possible that some of them will close down," he said.

Middle ground

"We believe that there is a middle ground but that has to be the subject of give and take," Bunye said.

A P25 to P30 minimum wage hike appears to be the emerging consensus between Malacañang and the business and industry sector based on discussions before the President made the Labor Day announcement that she had ordered the regional wage boards to expedite the review of salary adjustments within a month.

The Employers Confederation of the Philippines has rejected any salary adjustment at this time because it would force companies to cut their workforce or shut down operations.

"We acknowledge the concerns of the business sectors and that's precisely why the President remains focused on making the country a green pasture for investment and industrial peace," Bunye said.

Yesterday the ECOP clarified that employers have not yet agreed on a specified wage adjustment, contrary to what was reported the other day.

The INQUIRER quoted an unnamed official of a major business organization as saying that employers' associations were willing to raise the minimum wage by P25 to P30 a day, equivalent to a 8.3 percent to 10 percent increase in the minimum wage.

Malacañang has refused to declare whether it supports the labor sector's demand for a legislated wage hike of P125 a day.

Despite persistent questioning, Bunye refused to be pinned down on what the President believes should be the minimum wage hike.

Leeway for wage boards

"That is not for us to judge, there is a body that will evaluate this. We believe the regional wage boards should be given wide leeway to make reasonable adjustments at this time which we think is warranted," he said.

Gabriel Claudio, the presidential adviser on legislative affairs, said a wage hike "need not pass through Congress anymore because the regional wage boards are in full operation and they are the most reasonable way to decide on this matter."

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas yesterday said the regional tri-partite wages and productivity boards were "right on track" with the 30-day deadline that the President has set for them to come up with a decision on the wage hike.

Sto. Tomas said some of the regional wage boards—in which government, labor and management are represented—may even finish earlier.

But she said implementation would most likely take another two weeks, as the law requires effectivity after 15 days from publication.

Meanwhile, the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines, which groups 27 labor federations in various sectors, has instructed its regional offices and chapters to file the necessary petitions for wage adjustments.

The group is seeking a P150 basic pay hike in the Central Visayas and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao; P125 in Bicol and Caraga; P100 in Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Mimaropa, Western and Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula and Northern Mindanao; and P78 in the Nactional Capital Region and the Cordillera, Davao and Soccsksargen regions.

Non-negotiable

Militant workers' groups on the other hand maintained that the P125 wage hike demand was non-negotiable.

The proposed P25 to P30 increase in basic pay was a "peanut-type" increase and would be met with "massive upheavals from the ranks of the workers," said Hicap.

"The workers will burst into flames. They are fighting for survival and not begging for alms," Hicap said.

The Kilusang Mayo Uno said it would continue to press for a P125 across-the-board legislated wage increase.

Prty-list representatives in Congress have filed HB No. 345 seeking a legislated P125 pay hike in the minimum wage of private workers and P3,000 monthly increase in the salaries of government employees.

KMU secretary general Joel Maglunsod said Malacanang's sudden pro-wage hike stance was "purely grandstanding."

He accused the President of of seeking media mileage to boost her sinking popularity.

Senators close to breakthrough on VAT bill

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and TJ Burgonio

THE SENATE panel in the bicameral conference committee yesterday moved closer to ending the deadlock with the House panel over the value-added tax bill after a majority of them agreed to grant President Macapagal-Arroyo standby authority to hike the VAT rate to 12 percent.

"There's a majority in favor of a standby authority," Sen. Ralph Recto, head of the nine-man Senate panel, announced after emerging from a caucus designed to break the week-long stalemate.

Recto, however, declined to identify his colleagues who had favored his proposal to grant Ms Arroyo provisional authority to raise the VAT rate to 12 percent, except to say that they constituted "a good majority."

The senators left the caucus at around 3:40 p.m. in time for the opening of the session without agreeing on the conditions under which the power could be delegated to the President. They vowed to resume the meeting after the session.

"[What remains to be resolved] is the trigger, whether it be a low bar, medium bar or a high bar," Recto told reporters, even as he voiced optimism that the panel would reach a consensus within the day.

For its part, Malacañang agreed to the stand-by authority proposed by the President's allies in the Senate.

"We are supporting the compromise agreement because judging from our experience in the bicam, the deadlock on the 12-percent rate is hard to break. This (standby authority) appears to be the most practical and best way to break the impasse," Gabriel Claudio, presidential adviser on legislative affairs, said in a phone interview.

Claudio said Malacañang agreed to the standby authority because the alternative of having no VAT reform before Congress goes into another recess was "not part of its scenario."

"If this version of the VAT will help balance the budget and put the fiscal house in order, that is something we can live with," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

So far, two conditions for the granting of the standby power to the President have been proposed: If Malacañang could improve collection efficiency for the VAT or if the consolidated public sector deficit (CPSD) or national government deficit is more than one percent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

Finance officials had earlier proposed that Congress grant the President a standby authority if the CPSD was one percent or more of GDP.

For 2004, the CPSD stood at P233.46 billion, or 4.8 percent of the P4.84 trillion GDP, according to reports.

Alert up as Phivolcs tells Kanlaon folk to flee

By Blanche S. Rivera

RESIDENTS of two barangays within the permanent danger zone around Mt. Kanlaon have been told to evacuate the area as experts recorded high frequency earthquakes and higher-than-normal ash and steam emissions from the volcano.

Mt. Kanlaon, which divides Negros Oriental and Occidental, was spewing 1,100 tons of sulfur dioxide Monday, higher than the average 500 tons daily but lower than the 2,700 tons recorded on Sunday.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) also recorded one high frequency earthquake in the past 24 hours. There have been three to five earthquakes daily for the past weeks.

Phivolcs supervising science research specialist Jaime Sinsioco said he had asked local officials of Canlaon City to evacuate residents of Barangays Pula and Mananawin because they were in the danger zone.

"The 4-km-radius permanent danger zone is strictly off-limits because hazardous steam-driven explosions may suddenly occur," Phivolcs said.

In Aklan, all flights were suspended at the Kalibo airport yesterday but this was due to poor visibility and not because of the ash emissions from Kanlaon.

Hundreds of passengers were stranded when flights to Kalibo as well as to Caticlan, the jump-off point to world-famous Boracay Island, were suspended, said Allan Java, Air Transportation Office manager for Western Visayas.

Java said visibility at the Kalibo was reduced to 2 kilometers, prompting the ATO to cancel five inbound and five outbound flights. Around 70 flights were suspended beginning 12:41 p.m. at the Caticlan airport.

Java described the weather in the two areas as "foggy" and "hazy." Under ATO regulations, flights are suspended when visibility is below the minimum 8 km, Java said.

All other flights in Western Visayas kept to their schedules although visibility was also reduced at the Iloilo airport.

Sinsioco, who heads the quick-response team for Mt. Kanlaon, met with provincial, city and barangay officials in Negros Oriental last week to update them on the volcanic activity.

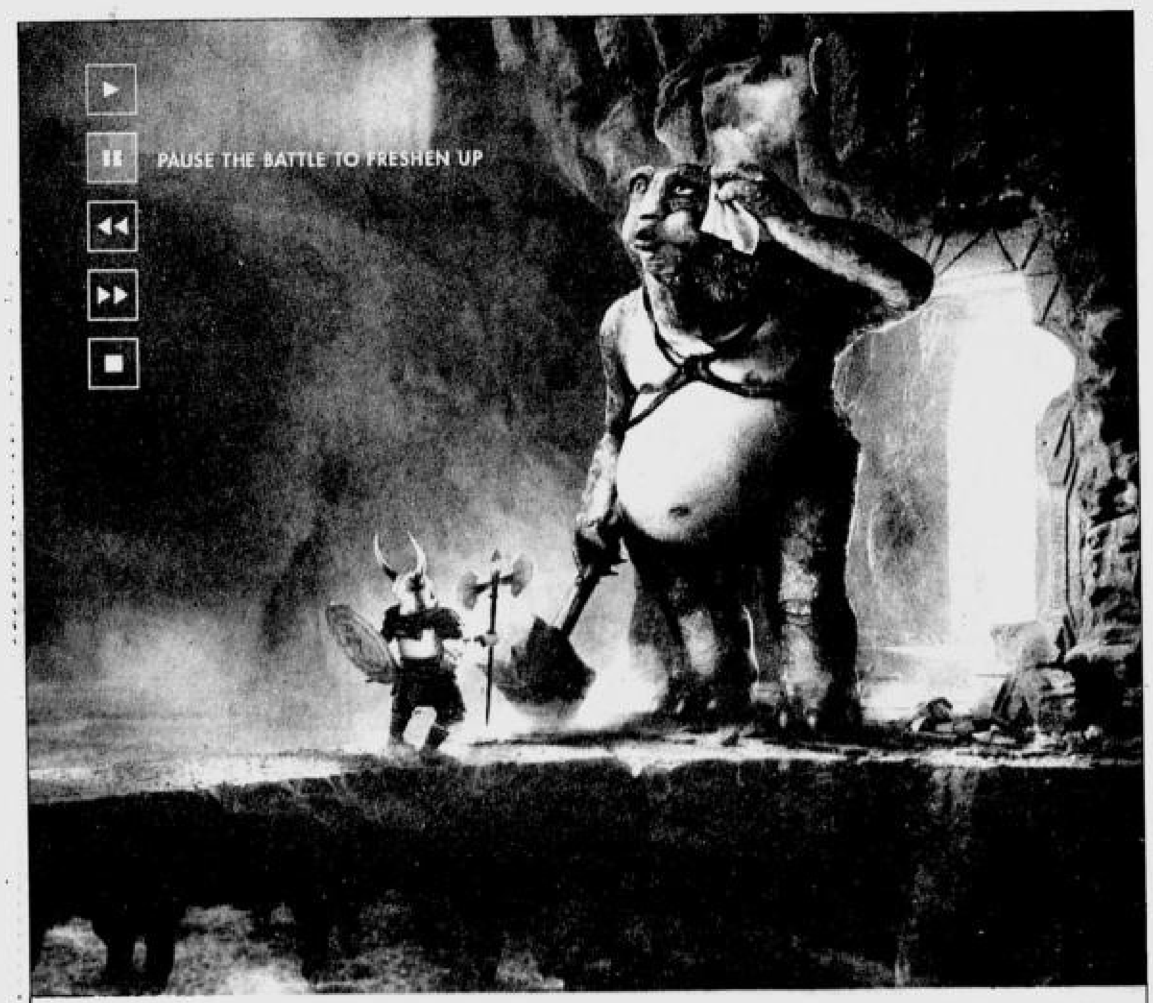
Phivolcs raised alert level 1 on Mt. Kanlaon last month, meaning there were above-normal activities that could be a precursor to bigger activity by the volcano.

The mountain has been closed to trekkers since March 30, but the mostly upland farmers who live in the two barangays within the danger zone have not been relocated.

"If it were up to us, we would not allow anyone to live there, but we're only a recommendatory body," Sinsioco said in a phone interview.

He recalled the death of three students, including a Briton, who scaled Mt. Kanlaon in 1996 despite a Phivolcs advisory not to trek up the mountain while alert level 1 was up.

The steam-ash clouds from Mt. Kanlaon shot 500 meters above the active crater before drifting off to the northeast and northwest carried by prevailing winds, Phivolcs said. *With Nestor P. Burgos Jr. and Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*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DOJ tax probers summon Regine

By Armand N. Nocum

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice has summoned singer Regine Velasquez to appear before the court to answer charges of tax evasion for failing to declare P3.75 million that she earned in 2003.

In a one-page subpoena, State Prosecutor Rosanne Balauag ordered Velasquez to submit a counter affidavit at 2 p.m. on May 17.

As this developed, some of the 200 actors and actresses who are being investigated for tax evasion trooped to the Bureau of Internal Revenue office to "rectify" their wrongly declared income or to pay their taxes.

Velasquez, known as Asia's songbird, is the second high-profile showbiz personality after actor Richard Gomez to be charged with tax evasion for failing to file the correct tax returns, a crime that could put her in jail from one to 10 years.

In a complaint filed by the BIR, Velasquez allegedly failed to declare P3.75 million that she earned in 2003 "as product endorser of Nestlé Philippines Inc."

Nestlé reportedly issued a certification confirming that Velasquez was paid the said amount.

The BIR said the amount represented 48 percent of the singer's P7.7 million declared income in 2003 which she earned from Viva Television Corp., Maximedia International and GMA Network.

AFP hails EU court's junking of Joma plea

THE ARMED Forces welcomed a European Union court ruling rejecting a petition from exiled communist leader Jose Ma. Sison challenging his inclusion in the EU's list of foreign terrorist organizations.

"The decision is a welcome development in the country's fight against terrorism and insurgency," said Brig. Gen. Jose Honrado, the military spokesperson.

"This ruling shows that it's not only the United States which has recognized Sison and the CPP-New People's Army as terrorists, but more importantly the European community as well," Honrado said.

On April 26, the Court of Justice of the European Communities in Luxembourg dismissed three cases filed by Sison challenging his inclusion in the EU's terrorist list.

Sison, the CPP founding chair, had asked the court in 2003 to reveal the basis for his inclusion on the list.

The court however said such information was "kept secret so that the information remains relevant and enables effective action to be taken."

Sainthood for Fr. Gallardo pushed

By Fe B. Zamora

FRIENDS of Fr. Rhoel Gallardo yesterday began the long and tedious process of gathering testimonies and documents to support his beatification as the "first Filipino martyr and saint of the new millennium."

Gallardo, a Claretian priest, was beheaded by the terrorist Abu Sayyaf group on May 3, 2000, after being held captive along with 56 teachers and students for almost two months in the jungles of Basilan.

Then 34 years old, Gallardo was the first Catholic priest abducted and beheaded by the notorious al-Qaida-linked terrorist group.

Yesterday, a group of Claretian priests and seminarians led by Fr. Bernardo Blanco, and Gallardo's relatives led by his parents Dominador and Raquel Gallardo, gathered at his tomb at the Himlayang Pilipino in Tandang Sora, Quezon City, to commemorate his 5th death anniversary and recall his heroic demise in the hands of terrorists.

"I have this feeling that he is alive, but away from me. When I'm sad, I look at the magazine (where he was featured) and I talk to him," Raquel Gallardo remembered her second of five children.

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Body of slain toddler brought back from US

By Nikko Dizon

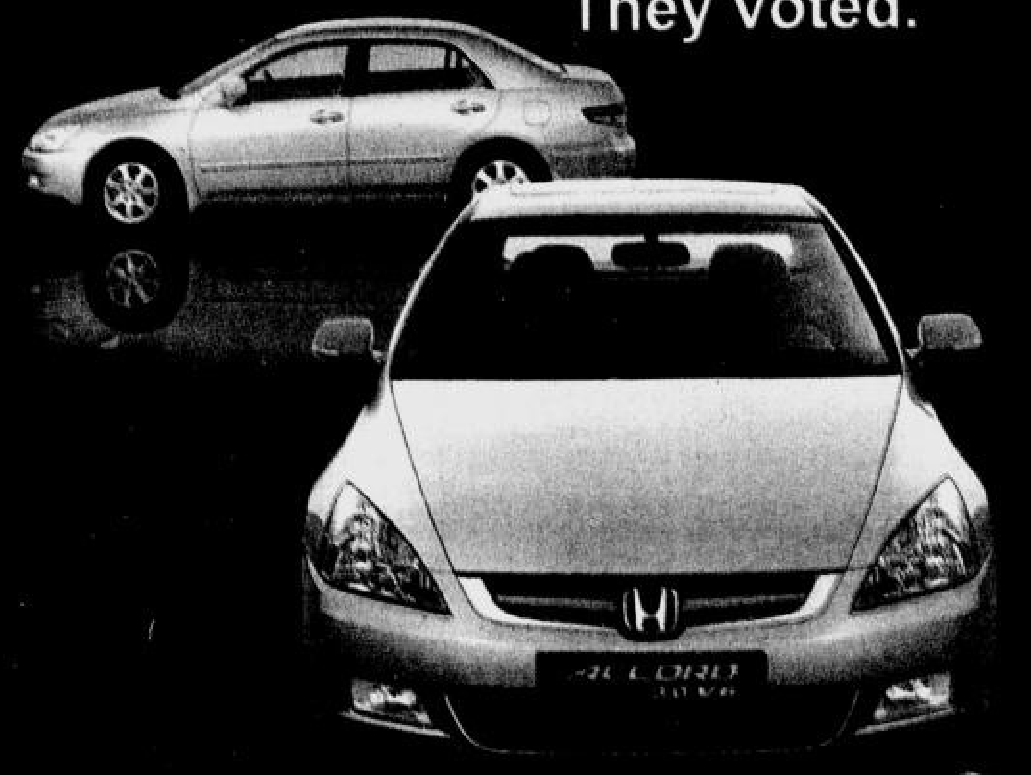
THE BODY of a 2-year-old girl who was stabbed to death by an uncle in a condominium in San Jose, California has been brought back to the Philippines, a statement from the Department of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

The family of Francesca Louise Paguio arrived last Saturday after she was killed allegedly by her father's brother Emil using a kitchen knife on April 16.

Paguio's father Enrico sustained stab wounds when tried to fight it out with Emil to save his daughter.

Enrico, his wife, and three children had just migrated to the United States and had just arrived in San Jose a few weeks before the tragic killing.

Emil's lawyer, public defender Peggy Banks, is studying the possibility of an insanity defense considering that the suspect has a documented case of insanity, Philippine Consul General Maria Rowena Sanchez to San Francisco said in the statement.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Fetus found in Catholic university

The body of an early-term fetus was found Monday inside the first floor comfort room of the biology building of St. Bernard University in Sampaloc, Manila.

The fetus, which is approximated to be 3 to 4 months old, was wrapped in a pink plastic bag when janitress Meldy Perez discovered it at about 9:30 a.m. while she was cleaning the toilets.

She immediately informed the president of the school's Joan of Arc Nursing Students Association, Andrea Felizardo who, in turn, called the police. Students, faculty and administration staff were shocked following the incident, primarily because of the school's reputation of being a premiere Catholic university.

According to police, the fetus could have been left by a student or a member of the university's personnel. Emilda Nepomuceno, SJ, Dean of the College of Nursing of St. Bernard University has expressed the school's full cooperation in the investigation.

This is an INQuest Adventure game clue

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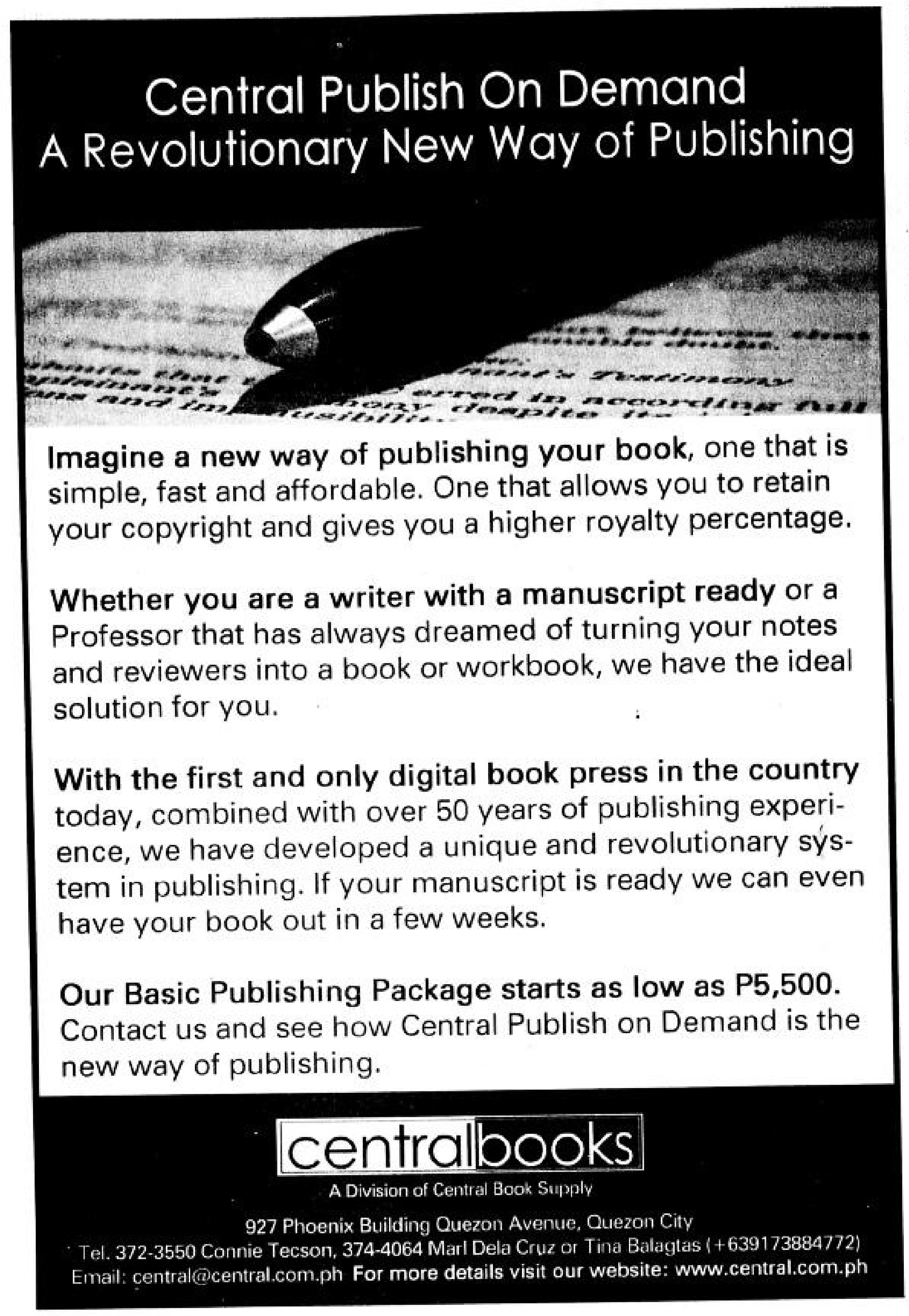
5 more bishops back call to oust Macapagal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From page A1

said the President was open to holding a dialogue with the three bishops.

Bunye said at a news conference that Ms Arroyo was "willing to listen" to sectors who were disgruntled by the economic policies and programs of the administration.

"The President is not closing the door to meeting with people who need more explanations," he said.

Bunye said the Palace "respects the dissenting opinion of others but we must also call upon them to join our march for unity, cooperation and solidarity to carry the Philippines forward."

More bishops may in fact push for changes in government.

Dagupan-Lingayen Archbishop Oscar Cruz said the CBCP was expected to issue a statement about the need for changes in government after its plenary meeting in July.

"Let us see what happens. Three bishops have already spoken so I expect a pastoral statement to come out about this," Cruz said in an interview in the House of Representatives.

Wake-up call

Cruz said the warning of the three bishops should move the administration into pursuing drastic reforms on behalf of the poor.

Labayen, Iñiguez and Tobias had threatened to support a "national day of mourning and protest" on June 12. The event is expected to gather other groups that have been demanding Ms Arroyo's ouster.

The bishops' complaints about the President's leadership were based largely on an economic system that purportedly coddles foreign interests while ignoring the suffering majority.

"This is a wake-up call for the government to be more populist in its positions, to be really for the masses," Cruz said.

Mounting complaints

Cruz said he shared his colleagues' observation about the mounting complaints of the poor against the administration.

"We have a lot of contact with the people and they are really complaining more and more. The surveys are correct. The people are getting more unhappy while they are eating less," he said.

But Cruz said he did not want a revolution or a military junta.

Leftists agree

As expected, left-leaning groups were quick to build on the bishops' criticism of the President.

"The bishops' wake-up call for the administration to shape up or ship out is a lucid testimony that the President's government is on the brink of collapse unless [she] carries out sweeping reforms that would correct social, economic and political injustices within the next two months," the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas said in a statement.

The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas said it was high time that more bishops spoke out against "a regime that has caused a lot of suffering to their flock and we hope that in the near future, it is the CBCP itself that will call for [the President's] ouster."

House reaction

In the House of Representatives, reactions were mixed, with critics hailing the three bishops while administration lawmakers warned them against becoming pawns "for destabilizers who are out to promote their own vested interests."

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles and Isabela Rep. Edwin Uy called on members of the clergy to propose solutions to the nation's problems.

They said the bishops "played right into the hands of the destabilizers who had hoped to ride on the Labor Day celebrations to foment unrest against the administration."

They lamented that the Church leaders had "naively allowed themselves" to be used by the destabilizers, "contrary to the clergy's role of promoting positive change and spiritual hope, unity and calm in the people's hearts."

"It's irresponsible to threaten the government with a coming deluge of change because of the people's suffering. The Church is duty-bound to be an instrument of positive social change instead of fomenting unrest that does no good to our people," Uy said.

CRUZ

IÑIGUEZ

LABAYEN

TOBIAS

Bull's eye

But Anakpawis party-list Rep. Rafael Mariano said the bishops "hit the bull's eye" in their critique of the administration.

"The three Catholic bishops' restiveness is no longer a simple wake-up call," Mariano said, adding that it was "a rumbling of the country's soon to erupt social volcano."

He said "the bishops' statement is a sign of extreme political isolation of the Arroyo administration due to its inability to address the worsening economic crisis and its all-out subservience to US policy dictates."

Mariano urged the people to heed and join the bishops' call for a national day of mourning and protest on June 12.

Group says 88% of taxes . . .

From page A1

and import dependence, the country's debt keeps piling up despite bigger and bigger annual debt payments," the KME said.

"This is explained by the fact that we pay outstanding debts not only through taxation but also with new debt."

The three bishops were also incensed by the government's purported preferential treatment of foreign investors and the "economically and politically powerful few."

Squeezing the poor

While obviously bent on imposing new tax measures, the government has allegedly been losing billions of pesos in revenue due to tax incentives awarded to foreign investors and members of the local elite.

The KME estimated foregone revenues at P109.19 billion in 2003, P98.55 billion in 2002, and P170 billion in 2001.

"The government is consistently reneging on its responsibility to its own citizenry," it said. "It is squeezing the poor majority and letting go the economically and politically powerful few."

Christian V. Esguerra

Corrections

A STORY on Page D2, "Quixotic fiesta!" in the Lifestyle section, May 2, misidentified Isagani Yambot as the INQUIRER editor in chief. He is the publisher of the INQUIRER.

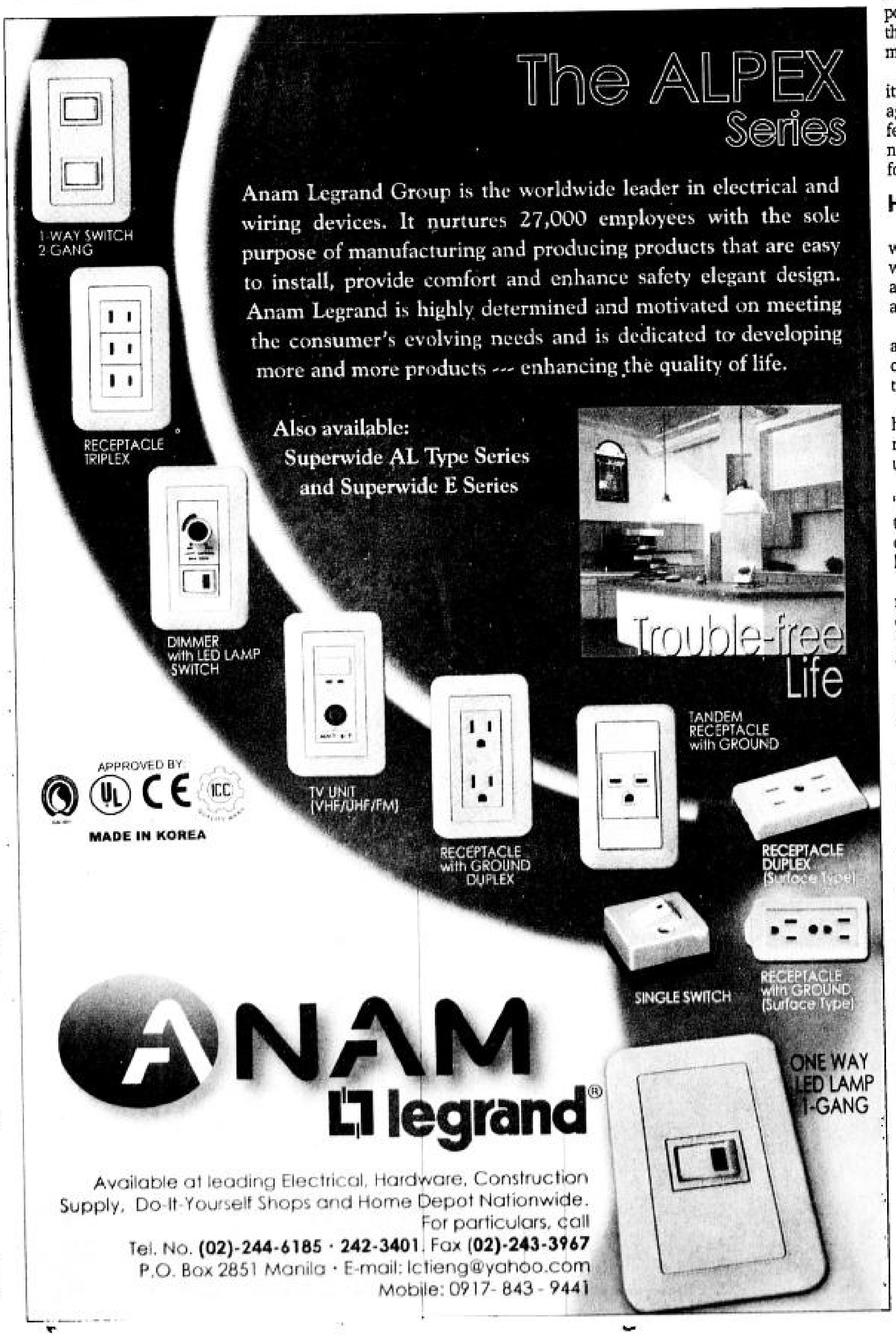
* * *

THE COLUMN On Target ("MNLF scores vs government troops anew") on Page A23 of the April 12 issue misstated that journalist Marlene Esperat was shot in General Santos City in the last week of March. Esperat was killed inside her residence on Ilang-Ilang Street, Barangay New Isabela, Tacurong City, which is 90 km from General Santos City.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to Gerry Lirio, city editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City; fax Nos. 897-4793/94; e-mail addresses: glirio@inquirer.com.ph and daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent, pending the appointment of a new readers' advocate, to Isagani Yambot, publisher, the same address and fax numbers as those of the city editor, and e-mail address: iyambot@inquirer.com.ph.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Kissing might give you bad teeth—DOH

By Christian V. Esguerra

BE CAREFUL whom you're kissing. He or she might be among millions of Filipinos with "very poor" oral hygiene.

At least 90 percent of Filipinos have poor oral health, as shown primarily by the presence of tooth decay, according to Dr. Basilio Baculan of the Department of Health's technical working group on oral health.

"I'd say it's very poor," he told reporters, referring to the general condition of Filipino oral health.

The National Monitoring and Epidemiological and Dental Survey conducted every five years showed that 92.4 percent of Filipinos had tooth decay as of 1998, Baculan said.

The condition was much worse in 1992 when a total of 98 percent of Filipinos were recorded, he said.

Started in the late 1960s, the survey covered Filipino children between six and 12 years old, teenagers falling within the 14-19 age bracket, and adults aged 35 to 44, he said.

Dr. Esperanza Viloria of the Makati health department blamed the poor oral health condition on the absence of "good and sustained programs" that should have been spearheaded by the national government.

Dr. Irma Parajas of the University of the Philippines Dental Health Service said oral health had spent a long time in the back-burner of the government's health programs.

Taking the cue, the DOH is now launching a renewed drive to educate the public on the importance of oral health. It will embark on an awareness campaign nationwide in the next few months.

"Every year, we want to see an increased proportion of orally fit child," Baculan said.

WHO to use Internet vs counterfeit drugs

THE WORLD Health Organization will harness the power of the Internet in its war on the $35-billion (P1.9 trillion) a year counterfeit drug business with the setting up of a web-based rapid alert system, the global health body said yesterday.

The WHO Western Pacific regional headquarters in Manila said in a statement that it would unveil today, details of the system, said to be the world's first web-based system for tracking the activities of drug cheats.

"The rapid alert system communications network will transmit reports on the distribution of counterfeit medicine to the relevant authorities for them to take rapid countermeasures," the statement said.

National health authorities and other partner agencies will be linked to the system.

"The rapid alert system will considerably strengthen our hand against the counterfeiters," Budiono Santoso, WHO's regional adviser in Pharmaceuticals for the Western Pacific Region, said.

According to the WHO, between six and 10 percent of all medicine on the world market is reported to be counterfeit with estimated sales of more than $35 billion (P1.9 trillion) a year.

The problem is most serious in developing countries, including the Mekong river region of Southeast Asia.

"Counterfeit medicine can result in prolonged illness or death as well as wastage of health-care resources," the statement said.

"Fake drugs containing lethal ingredients can also result in death. A study undertaken in Mekong countries in 2001 indicated that more than one third of antimalarial artesunate products in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam contained no active ingredients," the statement said.

"A follow-up study in 2004 showed that the situation had worsened, with 99 out of 188 artesunate samples found to be counterfeit."

The WHO said counterfeit medicine was often distributed across national boundaries.

"Effective measures to protect people from counterfeit drugs require collaboration and coordination among relevant stakeholders in each country, between member countries and relevant partner organizations," the statement said.

According to WHO data, some eight percent of drugs bought from pharmacies in the Philippines in 1999 were fake.

In 2001, some 64 percent of antimalarial pills collected in an investigation did not contain the active ingredient which led to the death of patients in Vietnam.

In 2003, national drug-testing laboratories in Phnom Penh and Bangkok looked at 230 samples of 24 pharmaceuticals purchased on the Cambodian market in 2000, including antibiotics and painkillers.

About 3.5 percent of them contained less than 60 percent of the labelled quantity of active ingredient. When the study was repeated in 2003, 11 percent of the samples fell into this category, while some contained the wrong ingredient, the WHO said.

In Nigeria and Pakistan, according to the WHO, counterfeit drugs accounted for between 40 and 50 percent of the total market. *AP and AFP*

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, May 4, 2005
6th Week of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 17:15,22-18:1
Gospel: John 16:12-15

Jesus said to his disciples, "I still have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now. When he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into the whole truth.

"He has nothing to say of himself but he will speak of what he hears, and he will tell you of the things to come. He will take what is mine and make it known to you; in doing this, he will glorify me. All that the Father has is mine; because of this I have just told you, that the Spirit will take what is mine and make it known to you."

Commentary

JESUS will soon ascend to the Father, leaving us with his presence, stronger than his physical body, in the person of the Spirit and he still has many things to tell us. It is the power and gift of the Spirit that gives us courage and the ability to bear the truth. It is the Spirit who teaches us all that Jesus knows—not primarily or only as individuals, but as his Body, the church and the community that is the sanctuary for those in need of the Good News. All that has been given to Jesus, is given to the Spirit, who in turn gives it to us to continue what Jesus was sent into the world to do by the Father. This Spirit is Jesus' new presence among us in the world. We dwell in the Spirit and the Spirit dwells and abides in us, holding us together in unity and diversity, maturing the Word in us and accompanying us in the world.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

LEGAL ETHICS—Duty of the sheriff—Under Rule 39 of the Rules of Court, the moment a third-party claim is filed, the sheriff is not bound to keep the property levied upon unless the creditor insists that it should be continued. This can be done if such creditor files a bond sufficient to indemnify the sheriff for whatever damages he may be held liable for because of the continued holding of the property. In this case, no bond was filed by the creditor-complainant in the civil case to indemnify the third-party claimant MMTC in a sum not less than the value of the property levied on. Therefore, respondent sheriff's refusal to release the property was inexcusable. More importantly, sheriffs are not required to examine the title nor pass upon the validity of a third-party claimant's title. This is a question that can be determined only by the proper court. Thus, respondent sheriff's act of delaying the release of the levied property supposedly because of his suspicion that third-party claimant MMTC's title was doubtful was beyond his authority. Sheriffs, as officers of the court and agents of the law, are bound to use prudence, due care and diligence in the discharge of their official duties. Where rights of individuals are jeopardized by their actions, they may be properly fined, suspended or dismissed from office by virtue of this Court's administrative supervision over the judicial branch of the government. (Citations omitted.) (Justice Corona, Third Division, Metro Manila Transport Corp. v. Santiago, A.M. No. P-02-1542) **By R.B. Vera**

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Abat won't get off lightly next time, says AFP

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

RETIRED Gen. Fortunato Abat should not be allowed to get away with seditious remarks so easily, the military said yesterday.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines warned the former defense secretary and Army chief that the government may not be as lenient the next time he calls for the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"General Abat is fortunate the government is not keen on charging him with sedition," AFP spokesperson Brig. Gen. Jose Angel Honrado said yesterday.

"Being a former military man, he should be careful with what he says in the future so as not to deceive the public into believing that the security of the government is being threatened, or to induce others to take unconstitutional measures," Honrado said.

Abat, 80, started a controversy after he declared on Saturday that his group, the Coalition for National Salvation, was forming a junta to replace the Arroyo administration.

The AFP, through Honrado, immediately declared its loyalty to the commander-in-chief and told Abat he could face sedition charges.

"The AFP reiterates that it does not share General Abat's sentiments," Honrado said yesterday.

"The AFP chain of command is intact and will remain strong and supportive of the duly constituted government," he added.

But, while saying that Abat did not enjoy the support of the military, the AFP and the Philippine National Police commands in Metro Manila went on red alert last weekend to guard against a supposed new destabilization plot.

Army chief Lt. Gen. Generoso Senga on the weekend radioed his field commanders, telling them to ignore antigovernment forces trying to recruit from their ranks.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez on Monday said he would not file charges against Abat because he did not want to "flatter" the former general with the attention.

In Zamboanga City, Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, Western Area police chief, told retired officers planning to establish a military junta to write a book or farm instead.

Querol heads the 5,000-man police force in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Western Mindanao and Northern Mindanao.

"Instead of indulging in wild imaginings like military juntas, retired officers should spend their retirement years productively [by] engaging in modest businesses like farming, or writing their memoirs so that these could be used as learning tools for young officers," Querol said.

He assured the public that the police under his command would not be easily swayed by the Coalition for National Salvation.

"Our men and women are no longer vulnerable to such adventurism," he said.

Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza questioned the credibility of the people behind the coalition.

He laughed off the idea of a military junta, saying, "It's baseless and bound to fail."

"Who are the organizers? What are their objectives and who are the people behind them?" the Southcom chief said.

Braganza said the more than 50,000 soldiers under his command would not join a military junta as they were "professional soldiers, constitutional soldiers."

"We will always follow the chain of command. We will always uphold the Constitution and we will fully support our republic, our government," Braganza said. *With Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Red Cross rescues conjoined twin girls

RESCUED ANGELS. Conjoined twins Angela and Angela Mae unmindful of the attention upon their arrival at PGH.

JESS YUSON

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE CONJOINED twins Angela and Angel Mae Garganta looked like they were hugging each other when they arrived yesterday at the Philippine General Hospital after a 16-hour sea and land voyage from Masbate.

Unmindful of the glare of TV cameras, the twins, joined at the waist when they were born five days ago, continued to sleep although they were literally mobbed by reporters and hospital personnel.

They did not cry or move frantically when Red Cross chair Sen. Richard Gordon and Amparo Perez, administrator of Red Cross Masbate Chapter, carefully handed them over to Dr. Josefina R. Almonte, head of the PGH Pediatrics-Surgical ward.

The birth of conjoined twins occurs once in every 200,000 live births, so the arrival of the Garganta twins was not unheralded.

It was the Red Cross that rescued the twins when the INQUIRER learned of their birth on April 29 at the Masbate Provincial Hospital in Masbate City.

The twins have two separate hearts and lungs but one umbilical cord, and attached to each other from the waist up to the chest. They have low birth weights, thus the need for urgent medical attention.

The Red Cross said the twins were joined near the chest area down to the umbilicus, a condition known as the thoracopagus type of conjunction.

Doctors have yet to run a series of tests to check whether they have separate gastrointestinal system (stomach, small and large intestines, liver, gallbladder and pancreas), but any surgical procedure cannot be conducted until after the babies are more than two months old.

In conjoined twins' case, "usually they have separate kidneys," according to Almonte.

In the past, one or both twins would die after separation, and the rate of survival beyond the age of 2 is only 20 percent.

Two hearts

Almonte said that because of the presence of two separate hearts, the Garganta twins had good chances of survival.

"We'll start from there," said Almonte, disclosing that some of the tests to be conducted in the next few days were MRI, CT-scan, 2 D echo, upper GI series and HIDA scan.

But PGH doctors could not say at this point whether separating the twins would be as successful as the operations conducted in New York on twins Carl and Clarence Aguirre who shared skull bone and blood vessels.

"The Red Cross is doing everything it can to assist the Garganta twins and to get them their needed medical attention without delay," said Gordon who appealed to Good Samaritans to "extend support to the infants and include them in our prayers."

Their first-born

Twenty-five year-old Reynaldo, a fisherman, told the INQUIRER that the twins were his first-born.

"We have been married for four years, but this is the first time that my wife gave birth," said Reynaldo, recalling that his wife Vilma had a miscarriage in the past.

"I'm only a fisherman earning P100 a day and my wife has no job. How can I afford an operation for my twins? Every parent wants their children to lead separate lives," said Reynaldo who lives with his family in Barangay Sawang, Uson town.

Red Cross responds

He contacted the local radio station dyME. Radio host Ruben Fuentes called up this reporter on Sunday who, in turn, relayed the information to the two top TV networks, through their reporters, and the Red Cross.

But only Red Cross, through its fund manager Gwen Pang, returned the call.

Almonte said that PGH had the facility and expertise to separate the twins so long as they had separate gastrointestinal (GI) organs.

"We have had 18 cases of (twins being operated on) since 1974," said Almonte.

CONFIRMATION WOES

Edsa II, Erap hound Reyes at CA

By TJ Burgonio

HIS WITHDRAWAL of support from embattled President Joseph Estrada in January 2001 in Edsa II has continued to hound then Armed Forces chief of staff Angelo Reyes.

Yesterday, at his confirmation hearing to be interior and local government secretary before the Commission on Appointments, Reyes' fitness to head a government agency was questioned by Col. Cristobal Irlanda (ret.).

Irlanda, a member of the CA committee on local government, said Reyes' withdrawal of support from Estrada when he was AFP chief of staff constituted conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, and showed a lack of intellectual integrity.

"He had neither the authority [nor] the power to do so [abandon Estrada]," Irlanda, a member of Philippine Military Academy Class '44, said, pointing out that the chief of staff "existed by the direction of the President and [the] orders of the defense secretary."

"Anything he [did] out of this, [was] illegal and immoral," Irlanda said.

On Jan. 19, 2001, Reyes joined the thousands who had massed on Edsa demanding the President's resignation for alleged corruption and incompetence.

The following day, Estrada stepped down.

Asked by Rep. Prospero Pichay why he did object when Reyes was appointed defense secretary by Estrada's successor, President Macapagal-Arroyo, in March 2001, Irlanda said, "Most of the time I was out of the country… I could have been out of town or in Singapore at that time."

Reyes quit as defense secretary in August 2003 in the wake of a mutiny by young military officers in Makati City who were protesting corruption in his department and the military.

Earlier in the day, the committee set aside the testimonies of Rosalie Ramoso and convict Christopher Elizalde, citing inconsistencies in their statements.

Elizalde, who is serving time at the New Bilibid Prisons for frustrated murder and car theft, claimed that he never executed an affidavit opposing Reyes' appointment.

"Why was I brought here?" the witness, clad in an orange prison shirt, asked the committee, eliciting chuckles from the spectators.

Elizalde had supposedly executed an affidavit claiming that when he was confined at the AFP Medical Center in April 2004 for injuries sustained in an ambush by anti-kidnapping agents, he was threatened with death if he did not admit involvement in the Betti Chua Sy kidnapping.

Reyes at the time headed the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force in concurrent capacity.

When pressed by CA members, Elizalde admitted that somebody had visited him in prison and asked him to sign the affidavit, but he said he could not recall his name.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile moved that the committee dispense with Elizalde's testimony and investigate how he managed to execute an affidavit. Enrile said the lawyer who notarized Elizalde's affidavit should also be disciplined.

Ramoso, for her part, failed to substantiate some of her allegations in her sworn opposition to Reyes' appointment, which turned out not to have been notarized.

Ramoso had claimed that her brother, Rogelio, had been Reyes' bodyguard from 2001 until Dec. 31, 2003, when he was killed. She said Rogelio had been ordered by Reyes to kill Ninoy Aquino International Airport executive Lilia Diaz.

Woman accuses Gonzalez of graft

A WOMAN claiming to be from Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez's home province yesterday filed a graft complaint against him with the Office of the Ombudsman.

Marietta Orleans, who listed her residence at 38 Fajardo Extension, Barangay Cuartero, Jaro, Iloilo City, alleged that Gonzalez had continued his private law practice when he was a member of Congress in 2002.

She said Gonzalez violated Section 3 of Republic Act 3019, or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, and Presidential Decree No. 46.

Orleans also alleged that Gonzalez had collected P156,000 a year in retainer fees from the Mayfair Theater and Odeon Theater in Manila.

Gonzalez was a three-term congressman from Iloilo City between 1995 and 2004.

Orleans asked the Ombudsman to file the charges against Gonzalez with the Sandiganbayan.

At a press briefing yesterday, Gonzalez said Orleans' charges were "ridiculous".

"She's charging me for practicing the law not knowing that any member of Congress can practice the law as long as they do not appear in court personally," Gonzalez said.

He said Section 14, Art. 6 of the Constitution was clear in allowing congressmen and senators to practice law "as long as you don't appear personally."

He cited the cases of a former senator, Raul Roco, and incumbent senators Edgardo Angara and Juan Ponce Enrile who both continued to take part in the operations of their law firms while they were in the Senate. He noted that no complaints were ever filed against these three.

Gonzalez said Orleans' counsel Bonifacio Alentajan did not know the law.

"The lawyer is ignorant. The lawyer advising her is ignorant," he said at a press briefing.

He described Orleans as "having the aberrations due to old age."

He said Alentajan was also behind a disbarment case against him before the Integrated Bar of the Philippines and other complaints which he said had been dismissed either by prosecutors or the Ombudsman.

Gonzalez clarified that since being appointed justice secretary in August 2004 he has stopped practicing the law and has closed down his law office.

He said his appointment had been delayed because he had asked the President for time to wrap up his law practice as he had to look for alternative counsels for his clients and close down his law office. *Nelson F. Flores and Armand Nocum*

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RP most murderous place for journalists

From page A1

ists to go unchallenged and unpunished, and demanded an investigation by the United Nations.

In its own report, issued on Tuesday to mark World Press Freedom Day, the RSF identified the Philippines as one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists to work.

"In the Philippines, where press freedom flourishes more than almost anywhere on the continent, hired killers targeted radio and local newspaper journalists on the orders of corrupt local politicians," the report said.

In Manila, the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines yesterday said the "myth" of the Philippine press being "one of Asia's freest" continued to be prevalent.

But there is no genuine press freedom in the country, it said, citing grim statistics: 23 journalists slain in the last three years, 66 since democracy was restored in 1986.

"As the world celebrates World Press Freedom Day today, an Ilocos Sur broadcaster lies in the hospital *(See story on Page A1)*, the latest victim of attacks against journalists in this country. Three journalists were murdered in the first three months of 2005; four others survived assassination attempts but suffered serious wounds," the NUJP said in a statement.

Unidentified masterminds

The RSF investigating team, which met on April 8-14 with the families of the murdered journalists, local press freedom organizations including the NUJP, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao, focused on the cases of murdered journalists Marlene Esperat, Edgar Damalerio, Edgar Amoro and Noel Villarante.

Esperat, a columnist for the Midland Review in Mindanao, was shot dead in her home on Maundy Thursday in front of her children.

STOP the KILLINGS of JOURNALISTS and ACTIVISTS! -GABRIELA
DEFEND PRESS FREEDOM

JOURNALIST groups demonstrating include the Philippine Center for Photojournalists, Press Photographers of the Philippines, Defense Press Corps, Metro Manila Radio Reporters Organization, Freedom Fund for Filipino Journalists, Center for Community Journalism, Antonio Zumel for Press Freedom, Concerned Artists of the Philippines and College Editors Guild of the Philippines. REM ZAMORA

"Even though police have arrested four suspects, the person or persons who ordered the killing have not been identified," the RSF report said.

"In the same way, those who ordered the murders of Edgar Damalerio and Edgar Amoro and of two other reporters in Pagadian [City] have never been questioned by police," it added.

The RSF said in its report that police and prosecutors were protecting those who had ordered the killings.

It said solving these cases would be a test for President Macapagal-Arroyo in the struggle against press freedom violations, corruption and organized crime.

Enormous problem

According to the CPJ, the five most murderous countries for journalists have the worst records, and together account for nearly half of the murder toll.

Of the 58 murders it documented in the five countries, all had been committed with impunity.

"By failing to investigate and punish the killers, the governments in these five countries embolden all those who seek to silence the press through violence," CPJ executive director Ann Cooper said in a statement.

She added: "The violence becomes self-perpetuating and the free flow of information is cut off.

But Cooper said that while the problem was "enormous," it was "not intractable."

"Governments must recognize that what's at stake is not only justice for those murdered but also the collective right of society to be informed. ... Governments, particularly those in the five most murderous countries, must devote the resources and exercise the will to solve these crimes," she said.

In the Philippines, the slain journalists had reported on government and police corruption, drug dealing, and the activities of crime syndicates, the CPJ said.

In Iraq, crossfire was the leading cause of death among journalists. But even there, the CPJ found that 13 of the 41 work-related deaths were homicides. More than half of those killed were Iraqi journalists who were targeted by insurgents because of their affiliation—real or perceived—with coalition forces, foreign organizations or political entities.

In Colombia, 11 journalists had been killed while reporting on such subjects as drugs, paramilitary organizations and local corruption.

In Bangladesh—where, according to the CPJ, journalists are routinely beaten, harassed and threatened while carrying out their work—nine journalists have been slain.

In Russia, the CPJ found that at least seven journalists died in contract-style slayings in direct reprisal for their work investigating organized crime and government corruption.

'Culture of impunity reigns'

The RSF condemned the "impunity" enjoyed by the killers and those who had ordered the murders of Filipino journalists.

"Not everything can be explained by the existence of a culture of violence in this country," its report said. "A culture of impunity reigns, for which the highest government authorities are responsible, that has allowed killers and those who send them to murder so many journalists in every corner of the country."

Also commenting on the spate of assassinations of left-wing activists and members of militant party-list groups, the RSF called on the United Nations to "summon the Philippine ambassador to the Commission for Human Rights and remind him of his country's undertakings as regards the protection of human rights."

It also called for a "fact-finding mission" to be sent to the Philippines to investigate human rights abuses and extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions.

Human chain

Journalists' groups yesterday formed a "human chain for press freedom" and lit 100 torches at 6 p.m. on Timog corner Tomas Morato Avenues in Quezon City.

The groups included the Philippine Center for Photojournalists, Press Photographers of the Philippines, Defense Press Corps, Metro Manila Radio Reporters Organization, Freedom Fund for Filipino Journalists, Center for Community Journalism and Development, Antonio Zumel Center for Press Freedom, Concerned Artists of the Philippines, Capampangan in Media Inc., College Editors Guild of the Philippines and students of the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication.

In Iloilo City, around 100 journalists and representatives of various sectors also formed a human chain and lit candles along Bonifacio Drive near the provincial capitol.

"If the Philippine press is free, it is because generations of journalists have fought for press freedom. If the Philippines remains democratic it is because its citizens have valiantly fought a dictatorship and shown the political will to resist and oust those who would subvert democracy in this nation," the NUJP said.

Citizens' last recourse

It also said that despite certain journalists' faults, "the Philippine media remains the last recourse of citizens who find the road to justice and good governance blocked by rapacious or abusive government officials and their patrons in the private sector." *Reports from AP, AFP and Nestor P. Burgos Jr., PDI Visayas Bureau*

Palace says report unfair, exaggerated

MALACAÑANG yesterday said it was unfair and an exaggeration for the United States-based Committee to Protect Journalists to identify the Philippines as the most murderous country for media practitioners.

"The statements are exaggerated and far from the actual conditions that are prevailing," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye told reporters at a news conference.

Bunye said press freedom was considered an "honored principle" in this country.

He said any journalist who felt threatened could always seek the protection of the Philippine National Police which, he pointed out, had been giving "special attention" to the media murders.

Bunye also said the PNP had formed a task force "to push through with the investigation of these different incidents, and for the last year they had a success ratio based on the filing of cases [against] the suspects." *Christine O. Avendaño*

Ilocos Sur cop chief sacked over shooting of newsman

From page A1

Arturo Lomibao ordered the sacking of Senior Supt. Mario Subagan, the provincial police chief.

Subagan's relief will "pave the way for an impartial investigation into the shooting of Seguismundo," Lomibao said in a statement. He said Supt. Crispin Agno, assistant provincial police director, would temporarily take over Subagan's post.

Lomibao visit

Seguismundo of radio station dzXE was shot by yet unidentified men in front of his house on April 29 at around 9:30 p.m. He is recuperating in an Ilocos Sur hospital.

Lomibao visited Seguismundo on May 2.

"He looks OK. He can talk. He can move, but he cannot get out of bed yet," Lomibao told reporters hours later. He also said Seguismundo had urged him to relieve Subagan in order to ensure a fair investigation.

"I am seriously considering [Seguismundo's request]," the PNP chief had said. "I will wait for the recommendation of the task force, as well as the regional director, before I make my decision."

Lomibao had earlier ordered the formation of Task Force Seguismundo and named Senior Supt. Romeo Espiritu, PNP deputy regional director for operations, to head it.

Yesterday, he ordered Subagan relieved.

3 possible motives

Quoting Seguismundo, Lomibao said there were three possible reasons behind the slay attempt: the broadcaster's critical commentaries on "jueteng" operations in Ilocos Sur, his being a member of the opposition, and the alleged overprice of a piece of real estate bought by the local government unit in Bantay, Ilocos Sur.

This was the third attack on a member of the media in the five weeks that Lomibao has served as PNP chief.

Crusading journalist Marlene Esperat was shot dead in March in her own home in Tacurong, Sultan Kudarat.

Alberto Martines of North Cotabato was also targeted for assassination last month. Like Seguismundo, he survived the attack.

Suspected mastermind

The Department of Justice has summoned Osmeña Montañer, finance officer of the Department of Agriculture in Central Mindanao and the suspected mastermind in the murder of Esperat.

It is considering discharging from the case one of the four suspected killers earlier arrested, who had alleged that it was Montañer who paid them for the killing.

In a subpoena issued by State Prosecutor Nestor S. Lazaro, Montañer was ordered to appear at the DOJ on May 6 for the preliminary investigation of the murder case filed against him before the regional trial court in Tacurong.

Montañer was also told to file a counteraffidavit and present witnesses in his defense.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez yesterday said the DOJ would use the statement of co-accused Estanislao Bismanos naming Montañer.

"We'll use him (Bismanos) as a state witness. I ordered the fiscal (Lazaro) to proceed with the preliminary investigation," Gonzalez said.

Bismanos, Army Sgt. Rowie Barua, Jerry Baguin Cabayag and Randy Fernandez Grecia are all charged with the killing of Esperat.

Confession

In an extrajudicial confession, Bismanos said Montañer paid him P60,000 for taking part in the killing.

Bismanos, who served as a lookout in the March 27 killing, said it was Cabayag who shot Esperat in the head once, killing her.

He also admitted being a party to planning the murder.

When asked who had ordered the murder, Bismanos tagged "a certain Montañer also connected with [the DA office in Cotabato City as] one of the masterminds and also the financier in the killing plot of Esperat."

He said Montañer was "the one providing money to [a] certain Madame to facilitate the killing of Esperat."

He also said that it was Grecia who procured the .45-cal. pistol used in the killing for P10,000.

Madame

In his testimony, Barua identified "Madame" as Estrella Sabay, regional accountant of the DA office in Cotabato City.

He said he first learned about the plot to kill Esperat from Montañer and Sabay, for whom he was detailed as a security escort, last January.

He said the two were worried about the summonses sent them by the Office of the Ombudsman in relation to the graft case that Esperat had filed against them.

Barua said that Sabay had asked him to hire a killer, and that this was when he approached Bismanos.

He said he was around every time Montañer and Sabay handed money to Bismanos.

Gonzalez had earlier said Montañer had once been investigated by the DOJ in Manila in connection with a multiple murder charge for the alleged burning of a hotel.

2nd time

"The case did not prosper one way or the other. That's why I told them to look for the records of the case," Gonzalez said, adding that one of two state prosecutors assigned to it could have already retired from the service.

This was the second time that Lomibao sacked a police chief after the killing or wounding of a journalist.

Days after Esperat's murder, he ordered the transfer of Supt. Willie Dangane, police chief of General Santos City. Esperat's husband George had earlier named Dangane and two other persons—a former congressman of Sultan Kudarat and a mayor—as her "mortal enemies."

According to Lomibao, Dangane was set to be removed from his post even before Esperat was killed.

But he said Dangane's sacking would be "advantageous for the case because it would erase any suspicion that he would [influence] the investigation."

Major concern

Lomibao had been quick to descend on the crime scene in the three times that a journalist was attacked during his watch.

"I personally take action so that I can be on top of the situation and determine the pace of the investigation," he said. "[This is also] to show investigators that this is a major concern of the PNP."

Local Reds accuse China of abandoning armed struggle

From page A1

China's first generation of communist leaders led by Mao Zedong. The NPA has been waging a violent guerrilla war for more than 35 years to overthrow the government and establish a Marxist state.

The CPP central committee accused Beijing of abandoning support for armed struggles in Southeast Asia "in exchange for China's accommodation by Washington into the world capitalist system."

Feeling orphaned

"Our revolutionary forces and people resolutely oppose the US-led campaign for neoliberal globalization, while China has welcomed it and relished membership in the WTO (World Trade Organization)," the CPP central committee said in a statement.

Philippine communist leaders, most of whom are living in exile in Western Europe, feel hurt and orphaned by the sweeping changes in China, according to rebel officials.

The CPP, which has been blacklisted by the United States as a terrorist group, used to enjoy party-to-party relations with the ruling Chinese Communist Party in the late 1960s, with the NPA guerrillas receiving weapons and money.

Diplomatic ties

Close relations between the Chinese Communist Party and its local counterpart ended when Beijing under Mao and Manila under the dictator Ferdinand Marcos established diplomatic ties in 1975.

After Mao's death in the 1970s, China's leadership under Deng Xiaoping instituted wide-ranging economic reforms. Beijing said it was promoting "socialism with Chinese characteristics" which, according to observers, was a euphemism for China's return to a capitalist economy.

Manila and Beijing marked 30 years of diplomatic relations with a state visit by Chinese President Hu Jintao last week. During Hu's trip, China signed deals for $1.6 billion worth of loans and investments in Philippine mining and infrastructure projects.

China funds vs local reds

Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz yesterday said the government intended to use $1.2 million in military aid from China to strengthen its campaign against local communist rebels.

"We want to get this aid in the form of equipment because we will start building what we call 'freedom' roads in 500 conflict areas in several regions where there had been very strong rebel presence and activities," Cruz told reporters. *Reuters*

GRADUATES of the New People's Army's military training course in their jungle hideout in Lianga, Mindanao, show they are prepared to fight the enemy. REUTERS

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29 killed in Afghan ammo dump blast

BACHGAH, Afghanistan—Investigators searched Tuesday for the cause of a huge explosion at a warlord's secret underground arms cache in northern Afghanistan as officials said at least 29 people had died.

Up to 70 others were injured by the blast on Monday which wiped out the commander's house and most of his family in Bachgah, a tiny farming village in Baghlan province some 180 km north of Kabul.

The explosion highlighted the continuing difficulties in disarming Afghanistan's private militia forces after some 25 years of warfare and civil strife.

The bunker belonged to one of the country's numerous militia commanders who concealed the weapons and ammunition despite pledging to join a United Nations-backed disarmament program, officials said.

"I heard a heart-shaking, dreadful explosion and saw black smoke around the commander's house and then I fainted," local farmer Ghulam Mohaiudin said, his hand and right eye covered with bandages.

"When I became conscious I heard screams and noise and there were dead and injured people around everywhere."

Afghan interior ministry spokesperson Lutfullah Mashal said the death toll was now 29. "An investigation team has reached the area from Kabul and the provincial police are also investigating," he added.

Locals said 34 died but the figure could not be independently confirmed.

The commander himself, named as Jalal-e-Bachgah, survived the explosion as he was in a nearby village visiting his second wife, his friend Commander Jahn Mohammad said.

Residents said he rushed back after the blast to find the 16-room compound where he lived with his three brothers and their families utterly destroyed, with most of his relatives and neighbors dead.

His mother and sister were injured and he immediately went to see them at a local hospital, they added.

Villagers said they had buried 23 people and were still digging through the debris. One eyewitness who helped pull bodies from the rubble said women and children were among the victims.

Afghanistan remains awash with weapons and powerful warlords still rule much of the country, with the central government's power barely extending beyond Kabul.

Almost 50,000 militiamen, who take their orders from the big warlords and local commanders, have given up their weapons under the UN drive launched in October 2003, according to officials.

The militia commander had previously said he "was disarmed and said he had no more weapons," Mashal said.

Villager Najmodin, 45, who lived near the warlord's house, said disarmament authorities had wanted to return and disarm him for good but never made it.

Tens of thousands of militia fighters have begun a reintegration package which gives them vocational education and some have joined the fledgling Afghan National Army or Afghan National Police. *AFP*

Conspiracy vs Jackson's young accuser bared

SANTA MARIA, California—Prosecutors nearing the end of their child sex case against Michael Jackson attempted Monday to flesh out an alleged conspiracy hatched by the pop icon against his young accuser's family.

Telephone records were presented showing dozens of calls between Jackson associates following a documentary broadcast in February 2003 in which the singer held hands with his alleged victim and admitted to sharing his bed with children.

And a bank manager testified how a close Jackson aide, Marc Schaffel, cashed two checks totaling $1.5 million from an account in which he and Jackson were the sole signatories.

The evidence appeared aimed at shoring up the prosecution's assertion that Jackson and his aides were so panicked by the documentary that they plotted to hold his accuser's family captive until they agreed to record a video rebuttal.

The phone records detailed a total of 38 calls between two of Jackson's aides on one day alone, Feb. 12—the same day his accuser's mother claims she escaped from the singer's Neverland Ranch.

Bank branch manager Beverly Wagner told jurors that Schaffel cashed a check for $ 1 million, and another one week later for $500,000, from the account he controlled with Jackson.

Legal analysts said the prosecution was seeking to tie Jackson closer to his unindicted co-conspirators.

"But the fact there was a lot of activity does not in and of itself prove there was any conspiracy," said Jim Moret, a lawyer following the trial. "There are a lot of loose ends out there they need to tie together."

Under defense cross-examination, the police sergeant who presented the telephone records acknowledged there was no evidence that Jackson was party to any of the phone calls. *AFP*

Aussie minister doubts release of Iraq hostage

SYDNEY—A task force was Tuesday headed for Iraq to try to secure the release of an Australian kidnapped by militants but Australia's defense minister conceded he was not confident Douglas Wood would be freed.

The team, which includes police and military officers, was expected to arrive in Baghdad later Tuesday to liaise with US and Iraqi officials.

But when asked if he was positive about Wood's possible release, Defense Minister Robert Hill replied: "No, I haven't got confidence of that.

"You can't look at the history of hostage-taking over the last few years in Iraq and have confidence in that outcome," he told reporters in Sydney after a trip to Iraq.

"I certainly hope he is saved and the federal government will do all that we can to achieve that objective."

Prime Minister John Howard said late Monday the group which seized Wood had been associated with kidnappings in the past and the contractor was probably captured for political reasons rather than ransom.

"We are very concerned," Howard told ABC television.

Australia has ruled out paying any ransom for Wood, 63, and rejects the kidnappers' demand that it withdraw its forces from Iraq.

Wood, who has lived in the United States since 1992 and is married to an American, had been working on construction projects when he was seized.

"Please help me. I don't want to die," he said in a videotape released Sunday by his kidnappers. He was shown seated on the floor and sandwiched between two masked men wielding assault rifles.

The videotape bears the words Shura Council of the Mujahedeen of Iraq. The group has previously claimed responsibility for attacks on US soldiers and Iraqi forces, as well as the kidnapping of a Turk who was freed in September. *AFP*

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Israeli Cabinet minister quits in protest over Gaza pullout

JERUSALEM—Israeli Cabinet minister Nathan Sharansky, one of US President George W. Bush's intellectual guiding lights, resigned Monday in protest at plans to pull Jewish settlers out of the Gaza Strip.

Sharansky, who became the sixth minister to either quit or be sacked in less than a year over opposition to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan, warned it would strengthen Palestinian militancy and divide Israeli society.

"In my view, the disengagement plan is a tragic mistake that will exacerbate the conflict with the Palestinians, increase terrorism and dim the prospects of forging a genuine peace," he said in a resignation letter to Sharon.

"I am even more concerned about how the government's approach to disengagement is dividing Israeli society," said the minister without portfolio who had responsibility for diaspora affairs.

Accepting Sharansky's resignation, Sharon paid tribute to the former minister for his "exceptional work."

Sharon has consistently overridden the objections of former right-wing allies such as Sharansky over the Gaza pullout, which he believes will ease pressure on Israel to carry out a more comprehensive pullout from the West Bank.

On Tuesday, Sharon and several of his ministers are to decide on whether or not to destroy the Gaza settlers' homes when Israel pulls out of the territory, Israeli public radio reported.

Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who is the Labor leader, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are among those taking part.

The government sought Monday to strengthen its hold on the West Bank by approving the establishment of the first university within a Jewish settlement, deep inside the occupied Palestinian territory.

All 8,000 settlers in Gaza are due to be uprooted from their homes in either July or August along with several hundred residents of four small Jewish enclaves in the northern West Bank.

Disengagement has already won parliamentary approval and Sharon has reshaped his Cabinet to marginalize opponents such as Sharansky.

While the prospect of a departure from Gaza has aroused huge controversy within Israel, Sharon's resolve has been strengthened by widespread international support for the project.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyep Erdogan, following in the footsteps of Russian President Vladimir Putin last week, held talks with Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas in Ramallah where he said that Ankara was ready to do anything it was asked to advance the peace process.

"We have let it be known to the two parties, with whom we enjoy excellent relations, that we are completely ready to do anything we can to contribute toward peace," Erdogan told reporters.

Abbas welcomed the idea of Turkish mediation in the peace process, although Sharon made clear at a meeting with Erdogan on Sunday that he would prefer any assistance to be limited to economic help for the Palestinians after Israel leaves Gaza.

Sharon's most important supporter of disengagement has been Bush, who ironically has been singing the praises of Sharansky—jailed in the former Soviet Union after being convicted of spying for the United States.

"If you want a glimpse of how I think about foreign policy read Nathan Sharansky's book, The Case for Democracy," Bush said in a recent interview.

In events on the ground, an Israeli soldier and a Palestinian militant were killed during a gunbattle in the West Bank overnight Sunday.

The army said exchanges of fire broke out when troops had gone to arrest "wanted terrorists" near the town of Tulkarem, leading to the death of 21-year-old staff sergeant Dan Telesnikov. *AFP*

African polio outbreak leaps to Indonesia

JAKARTA—The World Health Organization said Tuesday it had detected a case of the crippling polio virus in Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country, indicating that an outbreak rooted in Africa has leapt the Indian Ocean.

The case, affecting a 20-month-old girl on Java island, is the first polio infection in Indonesia for nine years, according to Bardan Rana, a medical officer with the UN organization.

Indonesian health officials have launched an immunization drive targeting five million children to prevent the spread of the virus which may have been transported from Nigeria via Saudi Arabia.

"There has been a case in Indonesia, the lab has confirmed it. The sequencing has shown that the case was imported and matches strains of the virus found in Saudi Arabia," Rana said.

The virus is believed to have been carried to Saudi Arabia by Muslim pilgrims heading to Mecca. It may have been passed on to Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-populated country, in the same way or through migrant workers.

"There are a lot of ports of entry and a lot of people working in the Middle East. It's not definite, but this is the most likely route," said Rana.

Polio remains endemic in only six countries, including Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Niger, Nigeria and Pakistan, with vaccination programs driving down the number of cases from 350,000 in 1988 to 1,243 last year.

But a handful of African and Middle Eastern nations have reported being reinfected following a boycott last year on polio vaccines in Nigeria, prompted by radical clerics claiming it had been contaminated by US agents.

Nigeria restarted vaccinations in July 2004 after an 11-month hiatus, but the disease has resurfaced in Benin, Chad, Cameroon, Botswana, Burkino Faso, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Sudan, Togo and Yemen.

Rana said the Indonesians have mobilized a major vaccination campaign in the densely populated region of Sukabumi in West Java province where the case was detected on April 21 and confirmed six days later. *AFP*

Indian troops kill 90 militants in Kashmir operations

SRINAGAR, India—The Indian army said Monday a campaign to hunt down suspected Islamic militants in Kashmir had left 90 rebels dead since the launch of a bus service last month meant to signal peace in the divided state.

The army campaign is being waged against suspected militants in the Indian zone of the state and is aided by an extensive network of fences built by India in the past decade to stop militants crossing from Pakistan, a senior Indian army officer said.

"We have intensified operations against militants given the people's yearning for peace," the officer, who declined to be named, said.

The operations are being waged despite a ceasefire by India and Pakistan along the heavily militarized Line of Control (LoC) dividing Kashmir and the launch of a bus service April 7 to reunite divided families in the state as part of a peace process begun 15 months ago.

"The militants were killed in nearly 60 clashes with troops across the state since the bus launch on April 7," the officer said.

Four rebel groups have threatened to attack passengers on the bus and disrupt the service in a bid to stall a move by India and Pakistan for a "soft border" along the LoC.

The officer also said troops had intensified operations against militants to gain an advantage ahead of the normal spring melting of snow now covering alpine passes along the LoC.

Kashmir received record snowfall this past winter, keeping the mountain passes used by the militants from May to November closed longer than normal.

The slow snow melt this year, combined with a pledge by Pakistan to stop militants from crossing into Indian Kashmir, has freed Indian troops to conduct more patrols in small villages and forests for suspected militants, the officer said. *AFP*

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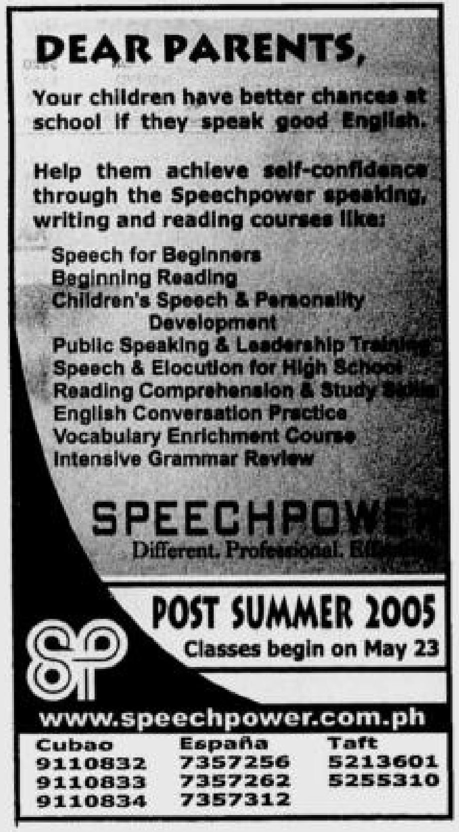
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US F-18 jet crashes in Iraq; one still missing

BAGHDAD—Search teams have found the body of a US Marine pilot whose F-18 crashed in Iraq, but a second warplane is still missing, the US military said on Tuesday.

The two F-18s disappeared on Monday night while flying missions from the nuclear-powered USS Carl Vinson, which is based in the Gulf off southern Iraq.

A military spokesperson said there were no indications the planes had come down under hostile fire. It was not clear if they might have collided during a heavy sand and lightning storm that hit central Iraq around the time they went missing.

Washington hopes to reduce its losses in Iraq by pulling out troops, but that is unlikely to happen until Iraqi forces prove they can secure the country, particularly hotspots like Qaim, near the Syrian border, where US forces killed 12 suspected insurgents in a firefight and bombing on Monday.

The US military said six soldiers were wounded in the fight near the border against suspected members of al-Qaida's wing in Iraq, which is headed by Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

American soldiers killed nine insurgents and three people were killed by a coalition air strike, the military said. A 6-year-old girl and a guerrilla were wounded in the battle.

The millions of Iraqis who braved suicide bombs to vote in the Jan. 30 elections hoped they would be rewarded by new leaders who would improve their security forces.

But it took haggling politicians three months to form a partial Cabinet, emboldening insurgents who have stepped up attacks since the government was formed. That government, still not fully formed, was expected to be sworn in later on Tuesday.

Car and roadside bombs have killed nearly 150 Iraqis and wounded around 200 since the cabinet was announced six days ago, constituting Iraq's first democratically elected government since Saddam Hussein's overthrow.

Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari has yet to name permament ministers to five ministries—including the key defense and oil portfolios—and two deputy prime ministers.

A list of candidates for those posts was expected to be handed to the three-man Presidential Council for approval before Tuesday's swearing in ceremony.

Choosing ministers is a highly sensitive task in Iraq, where a new Shiite Muslim political order has replaced decades of dictatorship under Saddam, a Sunni. The power shift has contributed to rising sectarian divisions. *Reuters*

US soldier admits guilt in Iraq prison abuse

ENGLAND

FORT HOOD, Texas—US Army reservist Lynndie England, the woman pictured holding a naked Iraqi on a leash at Abu Ghraib prison, pleaded guilty to abusing prisoners on Monday and said what she did was morally wrong.

"I knew it was wrong because who would morally do something like that in a US prison?" England told a military court after admitting guilt in seven out of nine charges. "I had a choice, but I did what my friends wanted me to do."

Photographs of Pfc. England, 22, with humiliated Iraqis touched off worldwide furor at a time when the United States was under pressure over the 2003 Iraq invasion. She could face a maximum sentence of 11 years.

Her plea deal contained a government agreement to seek a far lesser sentence, although both defense and prosecution declined to give details. A military jury will be chosen to consider the punishment on Tuesday.

England, a low-ranking clerk, said she reluctantly appeared in the photos at the urging of her then boyfriend, Charles Graner, whose child she later bore, and a second soldier.

In a series of pictures, taken in late 2003 but which appeared a year ago, she posed with a naked detainee on a leash, standing behind a pile of naked prisoners and pointing at the genitals of a male prisoner while smiling and smoking a cigarette.

"They asked me to point at his genitals. I refused at first and said 'no way,' but they were being very insistent," she said of Graner and Ivan Frederick, who are both in prison over their role in the scandal. "They were being very persistent and bugging me. I was like, whatever, I'll stand in the picture."

Asked about Graner's motivation in piling up the detainees, she said: "It was more or less for or his amusement."

Asked by the military judge, Col. James Pohl, about the circumstances surrounding the picture of her holding a prisoner on a leash, the diminutive England said: "(Graner) handed me the leash and said hold this, I'm going to take a picture."

"He wanted it to look more... humiliating if a female of my size would hold it," she said, and added: "I assumed it was OK because he was an MP (military policeman). He had the background as a corrections officer and with him being older than me I thought he knew what he was doing."

Before accepting the plea Pohl called a break, expressing concern that England had not known that what she was doing was wrong at the time, but when the hearing resumed she said she knew this after Graner produced a camera. *Reuters*

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A picture taken May 7, 1945 in Frankfurt am Main shows (from left) British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, US General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Soviet Marshal Gregori Zhukov and British Air Chief Marshal Arthud Tedder, toasting in Frankfurt after the signing of the German surrender in Reims. The date that World War II finally came to an end in Europe is still a matter for debate. AFP

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Italy hits US over its Iraqi checkpoints

ROME—Italy criticized the US military on Monday for failing to establish rules for checkpoints in Iraq, saying nervous US troops manning a haphazard road block were to blame for the killing of an Italian agent near Baghdad.

In a 52-page report on the "friendly fire" incident, Italy said the shooting of intelligence officer Nicola Calipari was not intentional, but it took issue with US findings released at the weekend that exonerated the American forces.

Calipari was shot by a US soldier on the night of March 4, as he was escorting an Italian hostage to freedom on the notoriously dangerous road to Baghdad airport.

The US inquiry into the incident, in which the newly freed journalist Giuliana Sgrena and another Italian secret service agent were wounded, has determined that it was a "tragic accident" in which US forces followed correct procedures.

Italy sat on the same inquiry, but refused to sign up to the US conclusions and instead issued its own findings in which it accused US troops of failing to set up "the most elementary precautions" to warn drivers of the approaching checkpoint.

"The attention with which the road block was planned and organized was careless to say the least," the report said.

It also denied there were communication problems between the Italians and the US forces before the shooting.

"It is likely that tension... inexperience and stress led some of the US troops to react instinctively and with little control," the Italians said.

The dispute has strained ties between Rome and Washington, prompting calls in Italy for Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi to withdraw 3,000 Italian troops deployed in Iraq. *Reuters*

Historic British rocket makes final trip to space

LONDON—Scientists drew a line under one of Britain's most successful space programs on Monday by launching the 441st and final "Skylark" rocket, nearly half a century after it helped start the space race.

The rocket was fired from Sweden, 47 years after the first Skylark mission blasted off from Woomera in Australia.

In the intervening years, Skylarks have been used to carry everything from crystals to frogs' eggs in to space to see how they react in a gravity-free atmosphere.

"Skylark was the originator of the space race for Britain," said Hugh Whitfield, who works for the company which operates the rocket and has been involved with the project for 30 years.

"It was the first British rocket of any importance to go into space," he said from Sweden after watching the final Skylark soar upwards.

"It's a good feeling," he said. "It's always a relief after a launch. It had to come to an end sooner or later and today was the day it's gone in to the history books."

Britain made its first Skylark in the 1950s when the country was competing with the United States and the Soviet Union in the fledgling race to conquer space. *Reuters*

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Gas explosion at ice cream factory kills 25 in Pakistan

PAKISTANI rescue workers search the dead bodies at the site of a collapsed three-story building in Lahore, Pakistan May 3. AP

LAHORE—A gas explosion at a building housing an ice cream factory in eastern Pakistan early Tuesday killed at least 25 people and wounded 20, police and rescue officials said. Rescue workers were sifting the rubble for about a dozen others feared trapped inside.

The three-story building in Lahore, that also housed workers' quarters and low-end apartments, collapsed in the blast.

City police chief Aftab Cheema said it was not immediately clear what triggered the explosion. Survivors, some in critical condition, said that gas cylinders had been stored in the building's basement.

Cheema said eight of the 25 people killed were from the same family, who were sleeping in an apartment on the building's second story.

Three or four nearby homes and several vehicles were damaged.

Mohammed Afzal, the official in charge of the rescue operation, said the blast happened at about 3 a.m. (2200 GMT Monday) and was heard around Lahore, the main city in eastern Pakistan.

"We have been told that dozens of people were inside the building at the time of the blast. We are trying to save as many people as possible," he said.

He expected it would take another four hours to clear the debris.

"We are using cranes and bulldozers. We are very careful because some people are still believed buried in the rubble," he said, as grieving relatives and residents wailed and cried for their loved ones.

The building housed a small ice cream factory whose 12-15 workers usually slept on the front lawn but had stayed inside last night because of heavy rain.

"First I heard a big explosion, and then saw the roof falling. I don't know what happened next, but when I opened my eyes, I was on a hospital bed," said one of the workers, Munib Ahmad, 25, recovering at Lahore's Jinnah Hospital. His head was bandaged.

Other survivors at the hospital said the building owner had ignored repeated requests to move the gas cylinders that were stored in the basement.

"We always feared that it would happen one day," said Sardar Ahmed, 34, who was sleeping on the second floor when the blast occurred. "He never paid any attention to our requests."

The owner, a retired academic, could not be reached for comment.

City mayor Mian Amir Mahmood told reporters that he had ordered an investigation and that those found responsible would be punished.

AP

Norwegian plans rivals to Nobel science prizes

OSLO—Nobel science prizes will face a "more daring" rival from 2008 with $1 million awards for research into everything from the "big bang" to the brain, a Norwegian-born philanthropist said on Monday.

Fred Kavli, a physicist who left Norway in 1955 with $300 and turned it into a $340 million fortune in California, said he was setting up three prizes for astrophysics, neuroscience and nanotechnology—the use of molecule-sized devices.

Kavli already funds 10 science institutes—nine at US universities including Stanford, Yale and Cornell and one at the Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands. Three scientists linked to the institutes won Nobel prizes last year.

"We want to spread the word of science and get more students interested... In many parts of the world that's a problem, from Norway to the United States," Kavli said.

"I think we'll be more daring," than the Nobel awards, he said, because they would seek to reward scientific breakthroughs more quickly than the conservative Nobel system.

Guardians of Nobel science prizes, first awarded in 1901, are sometimes criticized for rewarding elderly professors for work long ago even though founder Alfred Nobel once said he wanted to encourage "dreamers" who lacked funding.

The new awards, to be made every second year from 2008, would rival some of the annual $1.4 million Nobel prizes—for physics, chemistry, medicine, economics, literature and peace—and other science prizes.

Kavli's plan will be formally unveiled in a ceremony with Norwegian Education Minister Kristin Clemet on Tuesday at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, which will pick laureates with help from experts around the world.

The prizes would be handed out in mid-September in Oslo—a month before the Nobel awards are announced. Alfred Nobel was a Swedish philanthropist who invented dynamite.

Reuters

Japan premier apologizes over WW II Dutch POWs

AMSTERDAM—Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi apologized on Monday for the suffering and pain Japan's military inflicted on thousands of Dutch prisoners during World War Two.

"Humbly accepting the fact that Japan inflicted grave damage and pain on people of many countries including the Netherlands during World War Two, we would like to deeply reflect on this and offer heartfelt apology," Koizumi told Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende, according to a Japanese official.

Koizumi is in Amsterdam on the last leg of his whirlwind six-day trip that took him to India, Pakistan and Luxembourg.

Japan's wartime actions have continued to mar its international relations despite repeated apologies, which countries such as South Korea and China say have not been backed up by action.

At an Asia-Africa summit in Jakarta last month, Koizumi made an unusually rare public apology for Japan's wartime atrocities.

"In the past, Japan, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations," Koizumi said.

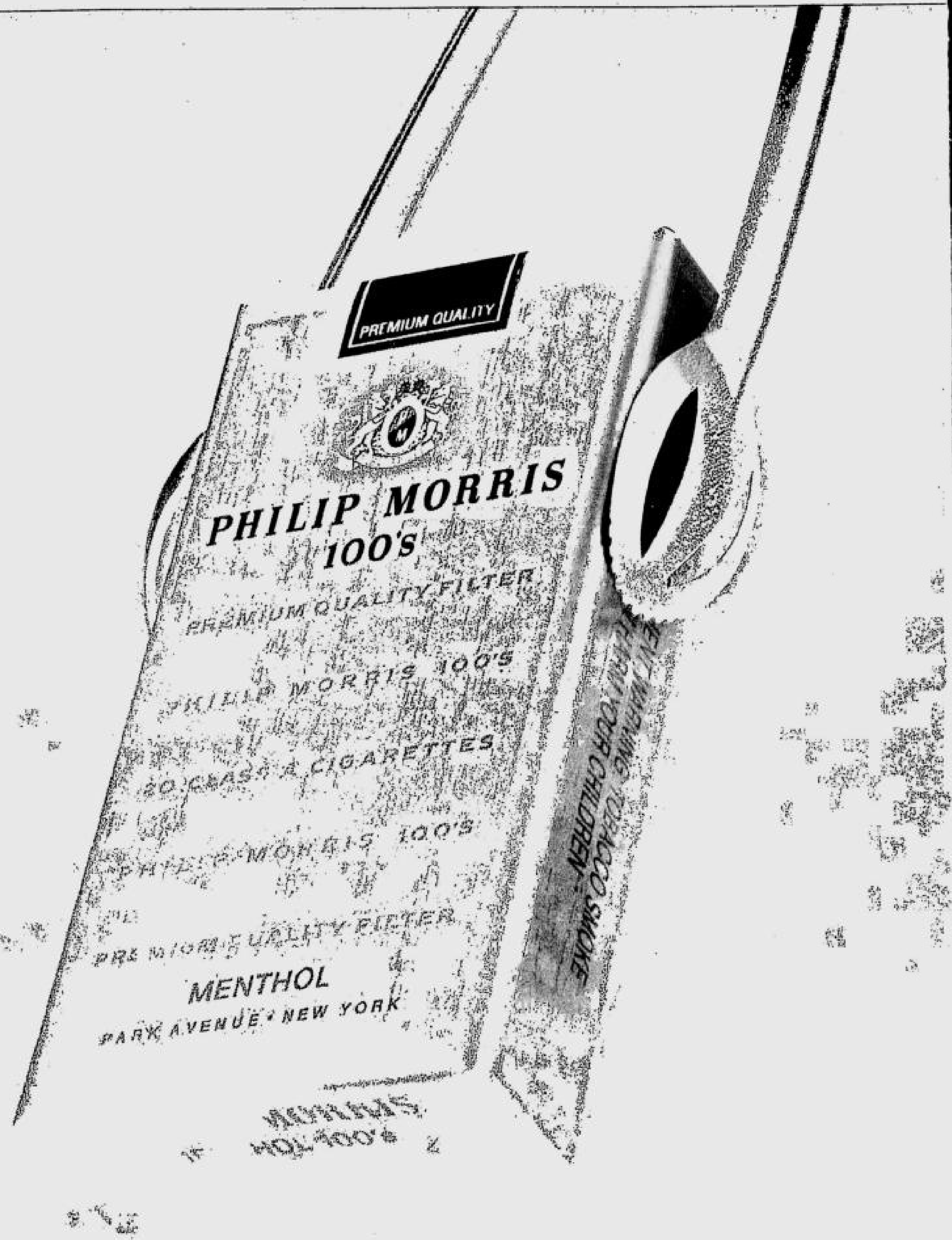
"Japan squarely faces these facts of history in a spirit of humility," he said, adding Japan always had in mind "feelings of deep remorse and heartfelt apology."

Koizumi offered the apology at a time when relations between Japan and China were at their worst in decades following three weekends of sometimes-violent anti-Japanese demonstrations throughout China last month.

When Japanese Emperor Akihito visited the Netherlands in May 2000, he expressed his "deep sorrow" over Dutch POWs.

An estimated 14,000 Dutch soldiers and civilians were held by the Imperial Japanese Army in the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia, during World War Two.

Reuters



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Rice: Nokor missile test 'provocative'

WASHINGTON—The United States has "significant deterrent capability" to thwart North Korea's nuclear ambitions, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned Monday as the White House called a weekend missile test by Pyongyang "provocative."

Rice told reporters, after talks here with French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier, that "the United States maintains significant, I want to underline significant, deterrent capability of all kinds in the Asia-Pacific region.

"So I don't think there should be any doubt about our ability to deter whatever the North Koreans are up to," she said.

The short-range missile launched off North Korea's east coast came a day before the opening of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty conference in New York and as Pyongyang stepped up its war of words with the United States.

Sunday's missile test was "a continuation of a series of provocative acts by North Korea, and they only serve to further isolate North Korea," White House spokesperson Scott McClellan said.

"There is a consensus among all parties in the region that the only viable path for North Korea is to return to the six-party talks and to abandon its nuclear weapons program," he said.

Rice said that missiles would "at some point" have to be a part of the discussion to scrap North Korea's nuclear program although she did not specify whether it should be included in multilateral talks, designed to end the hardline communist state's nuclear weapons buildup.

Her reminder of US military might Monday came amid increasing signals that American patience is wearing thin over North Korea's refusal to return to six-party talks hosted by China.

North Korea has been boasting about its nuclear capability in recent months and said it had built "the nuclear deterrent force" to "effectively cope with the arrogant, outrageous and brigandish method of the US."

Rice discussed the Korean nuclear crisis with her Japanese counterpart, Nobutaka Machimura, on Monday as part of their first round of a "strategic dialogue" and both urged China to play a more active role in reining in North Korea's nuclear ambitions, Machimura said.

"Certainly the Chinese have made a lot of efforts recently, and we recognize and appreciate that," state department spokesperson Richard Boucher said. "But the fact is, North Korea hasn't come back."

Rice and Machimura also discussed the possibility of referring the Korean nuclear crisis to the United Nations Security Council.

"We touched upon that at this meeting, as well, as one of the options on the table, but the primary thing is to realize the six-party talks as soon as possible. But everything else is on the table, as well," Machimura said. *AFP*

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MOST BEAUTIFUL MUMMY
Zahi Hawass, chair of the Supreme Council of Egyptian Antiquities, points at a 2,300-year-old mummy on display after it was found by the Sakkara pyramids south of Cairo May 3. REUTERS

US initiates deportation of WW II criminal

WASHINGTON—US authorities are trying to deport a retired New York businessman who lost his US citizenship last year for having participated in the Nazi liquidation of Jewish ghettos in Poland during World War II, the justice department said Monday.

"The departments of Justice and Homeland Security have initiated removal proceedings... to deport Jakob 'Jack' Reimer, 86... for his involvement in a wartime Nazi massacre of unarmed Jewish civilians and his participation in the brutal liquidation of the Jewish ghettos in Warsaw and Czestochowa, Poland," authorities said in a statement.

"As found by the Court, Reimer's demonstrated role in one of the most infamous chapters of the Holocaust—the destruction of Warsaw's Jewish ghetto—along with other acts of persecution, make him ineligible for the privilege of continued residence in the United States," said US Assistant Attorney General Christopher Wray.

"We will seek to remove him from this country as swiftly as the legal process allows," he added.

Reimer became a US citizen in 1959, seven years after immigrating to the United States.

A US appeals court last year affirmed a lower court's decision to revoke Reimer's citizenship on the basis of his involvement in "Nazi-sponsored acts of persecution," Wray said.

In 2002, a US district court found that Reimer had engaged in "concrete personal persecutorial" conduct on behalf of the German Nazi regime while serving in Poland as a noncommissioned officer in an SS auxiliary unit during World War II. *AFP*

Vietnam to test bird flu vaccine

HANOI—Vietnam will allow a French animal health company to test a bird flu vaccine on 600,000 chickens in the country's business capital Ho Chi Minh City, state media said Tuesday.

The vaccine, produced by the Merial company, will be tested under the watch of Vietnam authorities, Bui Quang Anh, director of the country's animal health department, was quoted as saying in the Tuoi Tre daily.

If the results were successful, poultry in other parts of the country would also be vaccinated, he said.

The deadly H5N1 strain of the bird flu virus has killed 36 people in Vietnam since late 2003. Another 12 have died in Thailand and four in Cambodia.

Health experts have said there could be another full-blown outbreak of bird flu in Vietnam this year if there was no vaccine or if steps were not taken to disinfect areas containing birds.

They have also warned the H5N1 virus could lead to a pandemic if it mutates into a form that could be easily transmitted between humans. *AFP*

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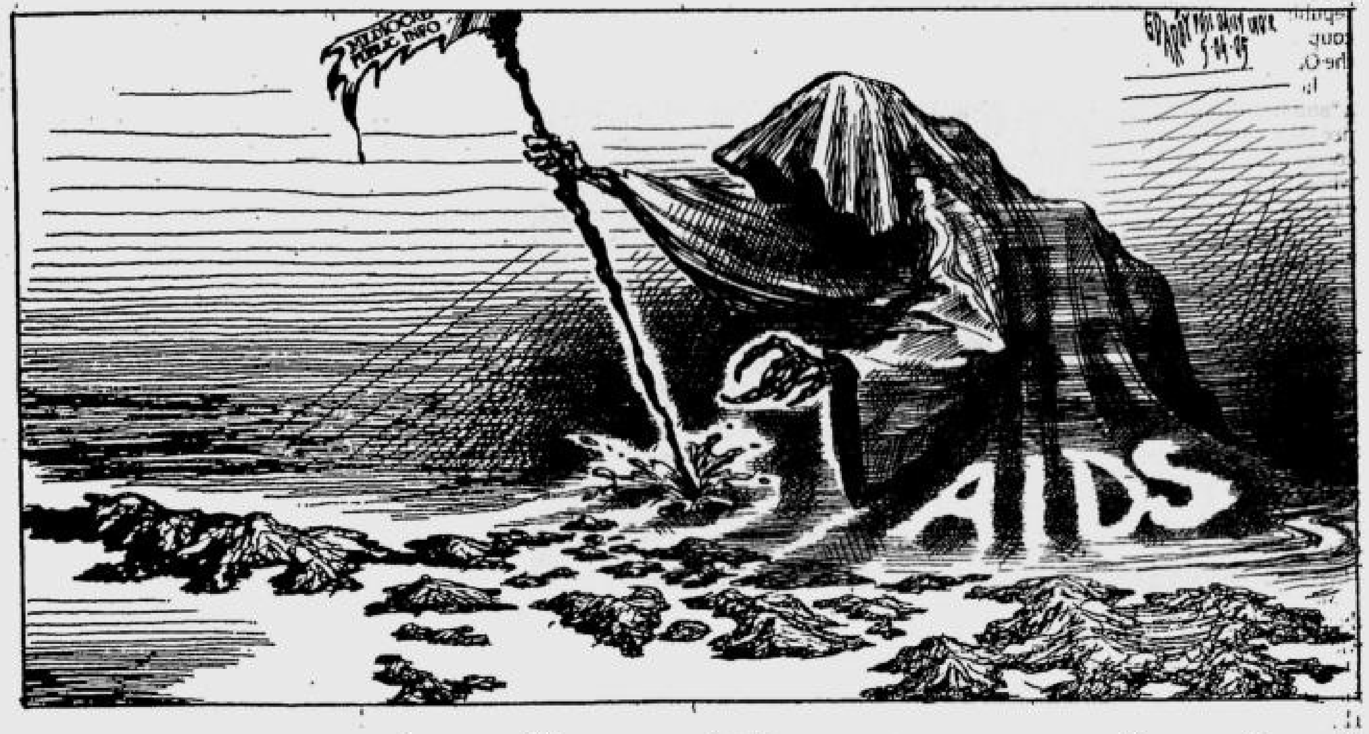

Sacrifice

From page A1

EDITORIAL

Our words are red, the color of blood. To die, as so many journalists in our country have died, is to offer the supreme sacrifice not only for a demanding profession but for a society that deserves nothing less than professionals willing to pay the ultimate price to validate their calling.

Red, too, is the color of danger, and it is to a clear and present danger, one posed to our society by a government whose agents, when not actively persecuting journalists, are indifferent to their fate, or show only half-hearted interest in giving them justice. We have said it before, and we say it again: a government that fears the truth, that cannot tolerate inquiring minds, that cannot protect journalists, much less punish their killers, is a government that is remiss not only in carrying out a basic obligation to journalists, but to the public at large. When the whistle-blowers, the journalistic investigators, are being thwarted through violence, the repression of all the rights of all the people cannot be far behind.

Our readers should reflect on the power of words, and what it means when the power of the state, of warlords and of criminals, is used in an identical manner, for an identical purpose: to silence those who speak out, whether in newspapers, television, or the radio. Words brought forth our national consciousness through the pen of the Propagandists; words were what condemned Jose Rizal to the firing squad, in an act of such manifest injustice that it fanned the flames of revolution. Words opened the minds of a country; they have served to help keep this country free; they have given meaning, and sustenance, to the long, tiring road to a better, more equitable, society and a country not only independent, but striving to be more independent every day.

Journalists love their profession and they love their country, and such love has been tested in the past years in the harshest, most unpitying, horrifying terms imaginable. We protest the spilling of the blood of our colleagues in our cities and provinces, in the dead of night and in the light of day. Each journalist slain is a life extinguished, an ideal crushed, a profession persecuted, a violation of the hard-won liberties of a society, our society, that deserves to be free.

The slaying of a journalist signifies the imposition of brutality and tyranny on us all. We are a society that has grown accustomed to speaking freely. We are a people that thrive on dissent. We are a nation enamored of debate. The bullets aimed at the heads and hearts of journalists aren't merely brutal answers to embarrassing, even exasperating, questions, they are the lethal foreshadowing of a mentality that will not stop with the death of journalists to find satisfaction.

The mayor, policeman, congressman, soldier or gangster who can only respond to criticism and questioning with guns, goons and grenades is the kind of person who equates authority with impunity, who confuses power with an absolute license to gratify the worst kinds of lust: lust for money, lust for power, lust for influence, lust for material goods. The mindset of the person who orders a journalist liquidated possesses a point of view that makes no allowance for responsibility, respect for others, or freedom for anyone besides that person and his minions.

What did it mean when Ferdinand Marcos shut down the press? It did not mean a kind of comeuppance for a profession not exactly known at the time for its virtue. It meant the suppression of truth, because truth is the mortal enemy of all forms of absolutism. Only with absolute control can those with fantasies of being able to absolutely impose their will on others find fulfillment. If the closing down of the press was at first welcomed by the public during martial law, the people soon came to realize that without the press, there was no freedom. For the most basic freedom of all is the freedom to inquire, to ask, to challenge.

"Don't shoot the messenger!" is not only common sense, it is basic survival. The day we can no longer distinguish reality from propaganda is the day we are irredeemably trapped in lies, with no hope of knowing a better day lies ahead.

This editorial was printed in red to commemorate the more than 90 Filipino newspapermen and women killed in the line of duty in 2004. Support Press Freedom. Stop the killing of journalists.

Pinoys to drug firms: 'Maawa naman kayo'

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

I GO regularly to a Mercury Drug store to buy my maintenance medicines and always there would be a few customers beside me at the crowded counter who would hand the pharmacist a doctor's prescription and wait apprehensively while the pharmacist adds the total cost of the medicines. Usually, it would be only a week's supply of medicines or just a few pills. When the pharmacist tells him or her the cost of the medicine, the customer would look at the crumpled bills clutched in his or her hand, think a while and say, "*Isa na lang* (One only)." Sometimes, the money won't be enough for even one pill, and the customer would say dejectedly, "*Huwag na lang* (Never mind)," and slowly walk away.

At those times, I wish the foreign executives of the multinational pharmaceutical companies selling those expensive medicines were there to see the look on the faces of my fellow Filipinos as they walk out of the drugstore without any or with just one pill of the medicine needed by a sick family member. Needless to say, the sick child or wife or mother won't get well because the family can't afford the needed medicine.

Indeed, many patients die needlessly because they stop their medication before they have taken the required dosage to kill the bacteria or virus. They can't afford all the medicines. The bacteria get a little immunity from the medicine and it would require a stronger dosage to kill them, which of course the patient cannot afford. So the disease gets worse until it kills him, all because the pharmaceutical company is too greedy.

Ironically, the company's business is to manufacture and sell medicines to save and cure sick people but in the unkindest cut of all, it is this company, not the disease, that is killing patients with its costly medicines.

And yet, the medicines can be sold for very much less and the company will still have a handsome profit. A survey has shown that prices of medicines here is at least five times more than those sold in other Asian countries. Yes, medicine prices in the Philippines are the highest in the region and in many other parts of the world. And yet, the Philippines is a Third World country where two-thirds of the population live below the poverty level.

The foreign executives ordering the high prices will never see the Filipinos buying their products because they live and work in their home countries. It is they who have ordered the executives of their branches here to price their products as much as the market can bear. The foreign executives assigned here have no choice but to obey the orders or else ...

There the situation stands, and that was the subject of last Monday's Kapihan sa Manila where former Health Secretary Alberto Romualdez, Rep. Ferjenel Biron (also a doctor of medicine), Sen. Alfredo Lim, and Undersecretary Teodoro Rivera of the Philippine International Trading Corp. beat their brains for a solution. Representatives of the multinational pharmaceutical corporations had been invited but after initially accepting the invitation, they backed out when they learned there would be panelists from the other side. The format of the Kapihan is to have all sides of a controversy together so that they can all present their sides, and what I have learned from the 20 years of the Kapihan (yes, Kapihan sa Manila is 20 years old, older than people power) is that the party that shies away from the confrontation is usually the guilty party.

Anyway, Romualdez said free market forces do not work for the pharmaceutical industry because there is no balance between supply and demand. It is the supply side that dictates the prices, he said. That is why prices are artificially high, and the government should step in. It is the duty of the government to do something to help the people, he emphasized.

Biron said the government should establish price controls. He and almost a hundred other congressmen have co-sponsored a bill that would create a Drug Prices Regulation Board that would set maximum retail prices for medicine.

Lim said he would file a counterpart bill in the Senate.

Rivera said the PITC is importing inexpensive medicines from India, Pakistan and Vietnam and selling them here to give Filipinos a break. In fact, it is helping set up a chain of Botica ng Bayan drugstores all over the country to sell their parallel importations and locally sourced branded and generic medicines, to add outlets to the government hospitals and clinics. It is now accepting applications for accreditation from private individuals and corporations, cooperatives and NGOs, labor unions and employees' associations, religious and other groups.

The PITC now has a list of 120 prescription and over-the-counter medicines to be sold to the public. It will soon publish the list and their prices in newspapers (they're very cheap). Patients should ask for them at the drugstores.

There is an ongoing propaganda campaign by the multinationals against PITC's parallel importations. It brands these government imports are "counterfeit," banking on the Filipino's wrong impression that "counterfeit" is the same as "fake." Wrong. These are the same medicines, the same formulations and dosages, the same strengths, the same brands made by the same companies as those sold here by the multinationals. They are genuine. The only difference is that they were manufactured in other countries, not here. And they are very much cheaper.

Waiting for Godot

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

FRANKLY, I'm not surprised that a group like Fortunato Abat's "Coalition for National Salvation" should openly call for Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's ouster, though it remains vague about its how-to. Abat himself rules out a coup—he abhors the idea, he says, and proposes people power.

Neither am I surprised that Raul Gonzalez, the justice secretary, a humongous mislabeling, should make noises about filing sedition raps against Abat. He has been threatening legal mayhem on everyone who excoriates his boss—he threatened to arrest Joel Lamangan for delivering a fiery speech at FPJ's wake last December. He is the same justice secretary who advised the public to ignore the PERC's finding putting this country next only to Indonesia as the most corrupt in Asia.

Both Abat's initiative and Gonzalez's response show how brittle the GMA government has become. GMA is skating on very thin ice, if the surveys are to be believed. The constitutional barrier against overthrowing a duly elected president isn't formidable in her case at all. Erap had the biggest electoral mandate among the presidents in this country, and he got booted out of Malacañang because of widespread perception his regime had become morally bankrupt. It's the same perception that now hounds GMA, and she doesn't have a semblance of that mandate. Indeed, to go by SWS and Ibon, most Filipinos do not even think she won the elections.

More bad news: Both Pulse Asia and Ibon show GMA's approval rating to have plunged to an all-time low. Ibon's results in particular cannot possibly deter GMA's foes from their grim purpose: The majority of Filipinos have not only lost faith in her, they want her out. Some 58.5 percent of respondents said so.

Indeed, in what should sound like "*Mene, tekel, upharsin*" to GMA's ears, the SWS found that Erap had a plus 9 trust rating while she had a minus 12, giving Erap a full 21-point lead over her. Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita promptly attributed that to the Filipinos' love for the underdog and the current economic downturn. Well, I don't recall that Marcos got a higher approval rating over Cory throughout the course of her term, which was also marked by much hardship. Remember the natural disasters that came one after the other, which had people saying, "*Malas si Cory*"? Despite that, nobody said Marcos was the better leader, except his loyalists.

You add to this the reports on one side of Filipinos wallowing in hunger in various parts of the country and credible people like Haydee Yorac disappearing from government (she was forced to resign for blocking another Palace scam) and on the other of Mike Arroyo spending a night in Nevada in a $20,000 hotel suite in Las Vegas, and you are looking at an engraved invitation to public outrage, if not uprising.

But Abat's idea of a revolutionary government to take the place of the current one is not fortunate, it is batty. Fidel Ramos is right to call it "*palpak*." I agree with Abat's diagnosis, I do not agree with his cure. Never mind that the name of his coalition itself sounds evangelical, resonating as it does with messianic tones. Mind only that its intent is messianic. The good news is that the revolutionary government wants a clean slate to reform the society and bring back morality, or plain decency, into government. Though here one must wonder about the wisdom of abolishing Congress alongside the pork barrel. Tempting as that is, in light of how Jose de Venecia and company have raped the concept of "lawmaker," it is a dangerous proposition. The worst elections are still better than none at all, a point martial law should have hammered into our heads. The point is to improve the stock of Congress, not to remove Congress. The point is to improve the voters' discernment of candidates, not to deprive them of choice altogether.

But the really bad news is who will constitute the "transition revolutionary government." Abat himself proposes: "The civil society groups will be tasked to choose the chief executive officer, who shall oversee the revolutionary transition setup, while the military and the police component shall choose the chair of the revolutionary council who shall effectively be the commander-in-chief of the revolutionary setup." I'm sorry, but I'm scared to death simply imagining that the two organizations in this country that most need reforming, if not abolishing, the military and police, the latter having not just raped the word "law enforcer" but battered it to a pulp, will be entrusted with choosing the commander in chief of the revolutionary council, the man in whom reposes the coercive power of the state. I can assure you the transition revolutionary government will not be transitory. I can assure you as well that it will be revolutionary only in that it will revolutionize the concept of fear.

Abat's initiative merely highlights a conundrum that has stared the nation in the face for some time now. That is the lack of a tolerable solution to an intolerable situation. I myself have no great love for the present administration, I firmly believe it's worse than Erap's, but I'll always be leery of any effort to bring us back to the past regime's embrace, or worse fling us from the frying pan into the fire. If the last two Edsas have any lesson to impart, it is not that we should not embark on that epic struggle again but that that we should make damn sure the next one doesn't end up the way of its predecessors. It's too much expenditure of energy. It's not an impossible dream, I do think the collective wisdom of Filipinos, notwithstanding that it is not always apparent, or our capacity for decency under threat of its obliteration, will assert itself in the end.

Meanwhile, it's still waiting for Godot.

Surviving from default

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

FOR NOW, President Macapagal-Arroyo has survived another coup plot with the collapse of the May Day 2005 Abat conspiracy. But she owes her survival to default—no thanks to a "strong Republic," which her government is not. In reality her government presides over a "marshmallow" republic, whose stability has been rocked by two coup attempts, first on May Day 2001, and then the Oakwood mutiny of 2003.

The government has derided the recent plot as a "nuisance." But a government that has sat in office for more than four years already and has not consolidated itself and continues to be plagued by what it dismisses as "destabilization" action has to examine seriously why it has failed to stabilize its foundation. The May Day 2005 episode happened after it won an electoral mandate in May 2004.

While Fortunato Abat looks like a decrepit old soldier with no troops to mobilize for an attempt to overthrow the government, he has composed a political manifesto, titled "The Coalition for National Salvation," calling for the formation of a "transition revolutionary government" that will replace the elected Arroyo government. The manifesto, announced last Saturday at Club Filipino, contains dangerous ideas that cannot be dismissed out of hand as the output of a crackpot. It captured and packaged issues that have become sources of popular discontent with the Arroyo administration. These issues should be examined seriously.

May Day this year passed quietly, and the fears that the protest rallies would serve as magnet for wider demonstrations failed to materialize. Thanks to the disarray in the Abat group, the administration survived another extra-legal action. The Philippine National Police, which went on high alert, proved equal to the challenge of maintaining order during the marches, which only demonstrates that the administration has succeeded in turning the PNP into an effective counter-coup force rather than an effective law-enforcement organization.

Despite the fact that the PNP represents the government's monopoly of the instrument of coercion, it has proved to be ineffective in combating criminality, as demonstrated by the murder of a diplomat in her home and the many cases of assassinations of newspapermen, not one of which has been solved by the police. The fact that murderers have gotten away with impunity suggests that a strong state does not exist. It suggests that criminals are not awed by claims of a "strong Republic," and are not afraid of state retribution. So far, the reorganized PNP has proved more successful as a political arm of the regime to ensure its survival against "destabilization" rather than as an organization that can protect ordinary citizens from criminals.

So, for the past few years, the security agencies have saved the government from extra-legal challenges and the PNP, which is in charge of domestic security, has developed as a counter-foil to coup plots hatched inside the Armed Forces, which has as many troops as the PNP.

Faced with seething unrest and the coup conspiracy, the administration last Sunday bought peace in the streets and breathing space by offering to raise the minimum wage by P25 to P30 a day, representing an increase of 8.3 to 10 percent of the current minimum pay of P300 in Metro Manila, the sensitive political center of rising protests against spiraling prices of basic commodities. The announcement defused the unrest in urban centers and was intended to blunt attempts by coup plotters to fuel discontent with the administration and mobilize recruits for their plans.

The value of the minimum wage, much less raising it to increased output, is a contentious issue in industry. The minimum wage has been used mainly as an antidote to political unrest rather than as an incentive to productivity. The announcement last May Day allowed the administration to buy time with a populist response.

For the past four years and a half, the administration has been jumping from one crisis or coup plot to the next, expending its energy on trying to survive rather than on governing well. Any government that cannot consolidate its stability cannot forever be so lucky as to survive on account of the incompetence of coup plotters and their wrong reading of events.

All the coup attempts since May 2001 have failed to present a credible alternative to the Arroyo government. In May 2001, the flash point of the revolt of the Estrada supporters who stormed Malacañang was his arrest. In the Oakwood mutiny, the flash point was the grievances of junior military officers over corruption in the military in connection with the procurement of military supplies for the troops fighting in Mindanao. In both uprisings, the plotters thought and assumed their actions would draw wider public support. The expected mass support didn't materialize.

In May 2005, there was no flash point that could have sparked a spontaneous movement. Abat was correct in telling his fellow protesters at the Club Filipino meeting, where his manifesto was read, that a successful insurrection required careful planning and marching in the streets was futile in the face of what he called "superior forces."

At some point, the administration will not be as lucky as it seeks to capitalize on the miscalculation and ineptitude of its opponents. It has been lucky that its opponents have been hammering on corruption over *jueteng* with the focus on either Jose Pidal or people close to the President, such as First Gentleman Mike Arroyo. The President has not been linked directly to such corrupt practices. But if proof is produced linking her directly to scandal, then the roof will crash on her head.

Myth of press freedom

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

ON A "Press Freedom Walk" just outside the "Newseum" in Virginia stands a pillar that pays tribute to journalists around the world who have been killed for the cause of press freedom. The names of the slain journalists are etched on the pillar's metal surface and when I first paid a visit there in 1997, I already saw quite a number of Filipino names.

I wonder how many more names of Filipino journalists have since been etched on the pillar, and what a statement the number of names makes about the state of press freedom in this country.

In the last three years, says the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, 23 Filipino journalists have been killed, bringing the total to 66 since democracy was restored in 1986. "As the world celebrates World Press Freedom Day," the NUJP said in a statement issued yesterday, "an Ilocos Sur broadcaster lies in the hospital, the latest victim of attacks against journalists in this country. Three journalists were murdered in the first three months of 2005; four others survived assassination attempts but suffered serious wounds."

And yet, notes the NUJP, the myth persists that the Philippine press is one of Asia's freest.

"Philippine media is noisy; reportage and commentary are robust, sometimes to a fault. Overworked, underpaid—sometimes, not paid at all—majority of Filipino journalists continue to serve as watchdogs of society. Harried and often times harassed, and frequently bereft of opportunities to improve professional skills, they continue to uncover anomalies in government and the private sector. They report on long-running conflicts that have cost the lives of tens of thousands of Filipinos and give voice to peacemakers, marginalized sectors and others who have fallen by the wayside of development," observes the NUJP.

* * *

THIS is not to say that media people, even those martyred for the cause, are perfect, saintly or even uniformly heroic. The NUJP itself admits that the Philippine media are flawed, and corruption within journalistic ranks has been acknowledged, most often by media practitioners.

But time and again, says the NUJP, "Philippine media remains the last recourse of citizens who find the road to justice and good governance blocked by rapacious or abusive government officials and their patrons in the private sector." It is while playing the role of watchdog and denouncer that journalists are most at risk, even as the majority of journalists are forced to carry on with their calling while receiving minimal payment, for little or no job security, and even scantier protection or recognition.

"There can be no press freedom if journalists exist in conditions of fear, poverty and corruption," the NUJP declares. "Neither can there be genuine democracy in a country whose citizens exist under the same conditions."

Could this be the reason the NUJP was recently placed in a "watch list" by intelligence agencies, along with another journalists' group, the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism?

* * *

IT certainly strains the journalistic community's credulity when government officials, led by the President, express their determination to identify and prosecute those who attack and kill journalists, and then turn around and identify journalists' organizations as potentially subversive.

The motive for placing NUJP under watch is even more suspect considering that it's been the press organization that's been most vociferous and persistent in denouncing the killings and demanding that government move quickly to stem the tide of violence against journalists.

The world is watching how the situation pans out. A new study by the Committee to Protect Journalists has found that the Philippines "is the most murderous country of all," with murder being the leading cause of job-related deaths among journalists worldwide.

In its report on the "Most Murderous Countries for Journalists," the CPJ likewise identified Iraq, Colombia, Bangladesh and Russia as the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists.

The CPJ holds governments liable for the killings of journalists. "By failing to investigate and punish the killers, the governments in these five countries embolden all those who seek to silence the press through violence," CPJ Executive Director Ann Cooper said. "The violence becomes self-perpetuating and the free flow of information is cut off."

And that's why the nation should be concerned about the continuing violence specifically aimed at journalists who seek to stay true to their calling. Not because journalists are worthy of special protection or more protection than the ordinary citizen is entitled to, but because in silencing the media, journalists' killers silence democracy and the free flow of information and opinion that is essential to it.

* * *

I'VE been against the proposal of some groups to allow journalists to carry arms to protect themselves against possible assassins or attackers. Journalists should be willing to take the same risks in pursuit of their profession as other citizens; just as politicians should, too.

But the lack of resolve and the mixed messages sent by the national government is having a "chilling effect" on the media, especially on those journalists who pursue the profession in the provinces, under conditions of obscurity and special vulnerability to political and business interests. It may be well and good for me, a journalist for a national publication, to say journalists don't need any coddling, but would I be so brave to defy the odds if I were writing for a provincial newspaper?

Indeed, press freedom may be just a myth in a country where journalists are being killed with impunity and where the voice of the press is so easy to silence.

Modern Philippine inventions

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

THE LONG Labor Day weekend would have been perfect for an out-of-town picnic, but the announcement of the Monday holiday came too late to plan anything. Shouldn't we be given a complete and definite list of non-working holidays at the start of the year so that we can plan ahead? I shouldn't complain because a holiday is always a treat—if only to lounge in bed longer than usual, and, were it not for the record-breaking heat we have been experiencing lately, a leisurely trip to the mall.

Over the weekend, a friend invited me to the new restaurant complex along Macapagal Boulevard called Blue Wave to try a new Vietnamese restaurant. The fried spring rolls were good even if the min leaves were a bit wilted. The house blend iced tea was refreshing and not some cheap powdered type. Our chicken hot pot with rice was piping hot and comparable to similar dishes I have had elsewhere. The only hitch to an otherwise pleasant meal was finding a whole cockroach in the rice. The poor thing was pale and had been thoroughly cooked.

My friend called the waiter and it took awhile for the operations manager to appear. By way of an apology, he offered food from the Italian restaurant or coffee to wash down whatever disgust we felt inside. Naturally, we declined the offer of more food or drink and accepted the free spring rolls. The manager then disappeared still without making a direct apology.

Friends were shocked that we took this so lightly, but then one never knows what happens in a kitchen. I take food on faith alone. I'm not a scandalous customer, and I know no one in his right mind would deliberately put cockroach garnish on your meal. It is just one of those unavoidable things that happen every day.

Frankly, the worst that could have happened was if we finished most of the dish and found not the whole cockroach but half of it in the food, not knowing whether we had ingested the other half or not. It was cooked anyway. The only problem was that we had partaken of its juices. Nevertheless, I'm still alive to write this column, so no harm done.

While waiting for the roach juice to take effect, I thought about coping with life in the city and came up with some things you have probably seen but never noticed.

Look at the roof of some of the trains that still pass through the southern end of Metro Manila. These run-down trains have steep and pointed roofs, a feature unique to trains the world over. These are not innovations in design, rather they are very practical responses to a concrete situation. When a train with a flat roof passes through the various communities that have sprouted along the way, making it impossible for any type of expansion or widening to get better faster service, people put their garbage (and sometimes human waste) in plastic bags and throw them on board. This way they solve their garbage problem and avoid a trip to a common spot for garbage collection. Pointed roofs ensure that garbage bags thrown on to the train simply fall back, reminding us of the slogan, *"Ang basurang itinapon mo, babalik sa iyo!"*

Speaking of trains, we visited the Legazpi City PNR station recently and it was a sorry sight. It seems the trains do not reach this part of town anymore because of problems with the tracks.

It was there that a UP professor suggested that we go to nearby Tabaco to buy scissors. He claimed the best scissors, knives and nail cutters made in the Philippines come from Tabaco. When I asked what made them special, he said the metal used for these items came from stolen railroad tracks!

So I made a trip to Tabaco, and ended up disappointed because the shiny and very sharp scissors were made from steel ball bearings rather than hot railroad tracks. *Sayang.* The best bolos were also said to be made from railroad tracks, but it's now illegal to make these. Will they take special orders?

In Metro Manila, any metal from used soda cans to manhole covers can be re-sold. Telephone cables, electric wire, historical markers—anything that isn't securely fastened to the ground—are fair game. Next time you pass through the overpasses, take a look at the metal railings that are fast disappearing. I wonder how long the the pink chicken wire fences will stay on Edsa. We are a very creative people—but for the wrong reasons.

Another great Philippine invention, aside from the pointed train roofs, are the anti-terrorist devices that have found great use since 9/11. When we go to the airport, a posh hotel, or a mall, we are briefly detained by guards who flag down the vehicle and politely request that we open the trunk. Sometimes they even go the extra mile and peek into the glove compartment, or like US Embassy security scan the underside of the car with a mirror.

Would a guard recognize a bomb if he or she saw one? Would a real terrorist keep a bomb in the glove compartment? At the entrances to malls and hotels you often see an unused metal detector lying on the table as decoration, because Philippine security personnel trust in our great anti-terrorist device: the barbecue stick. This great Philippine innovation in international security techniques is used for poking inside bags and is supposed to detect a hidden bomb or firearm.

One would think we would be serious about security or not do it at all. What is it in Philippine culture that gives us so much patience?

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Beyond 'Miss Saigon'

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

Many Filipinos know of Vietnam mainly through the musical "Miss Saigon." There's irony in the way Vietnam is presented to the world through this musical because whenever it's staged in the West, the Vietnamese parts are played mainly by Filipinos. Yet, I suspect even the Filipino cast members don't know too much about Vietnam, and the ties that bind us.

The recent 30th anniversary of Vietnam's reunification (labelled in the Western press as the fall of Saigon) went almost unnoticed in the Philippines. Yet that war, which claimed the lives of three million Vietnamese and 58,000 American soldiers, was a watershed in modern history, a replay of the biblical David and Goliath story.

First Vietnam

After World War II, both Vietnam and the Philippines were restless colonies seeking independence. Our struggle was less turbulent: independence was "granted" to us by Mother America with all kinds of conditionalities—US bases, preferential trade agreements—that kept us a client state.

The Vietnamese independence movement, headed by a nationalist named Ho Chi Minh, met with greater resistance from the French. Ho was known to have sought assistance from the United States in his fight for independence from the French, but the Americans rejected him, seeing him mainly as a communist. To make a long story short, the French were eventually booted out but Vietnam was divided into a "communist" north and a "democratic" south. The politicians in South Vietnam, like their counterparts in the Philippines, learned early that to stay in power, they needed to please Washington. The US government, on the other hand, backed the corrupt politicians in Saigon because of the domino theory, the idea that if Vietnam turned communist, the other southeast Asian countries would fall too, like a row of dominoes.

To keep South Vietnam "free," the United States first sent in military advisers in 1958. By 1965, the US government had to send in fighting troops.

The Philippines was to play a major role in this debacle. Hosting the largest US military bases outside of mainland United States, we were an important staging point for US operations against the North Vietnamese. Less than a year after the first US troops were deployed in Vietnam, we went a Philcag (Philippine Civic Action Group) contingent, composed of non-combatants, mainly engineers and mechanics, but coming from the Philippine Armed Forces.

American military involvement in Vietnam dragged on for almost a decade. It was a losing battle from the beginning, American soldiers being unfamiliar with the terrain and, more importantly, the psychology of the Vietnamese. The Americans could not understand, as they still cannot understand today in Iraq, how people could reject their "benevolence."

Yet, the US entered Vietnam with one advantage: fighting experience gained from the Philippine-American War at the turn of the 20th century. Some historians call the Philippines "the first Vietnam" because it was here where the US first developed some of the tools—from interrogation methods to strategic hamletting—that they were to use later in Vietnam. I'm being euphemistic in using those terms: read "torture" for interrogation methods and "population concentration centers" for strategic hamletting.

Vietnam rose

Our involvement in the Vietnam War wasn't just military in nature. Angeles and Olongapo became major rest and recreation (R&R) destinations for war-weary US soldiers. After the Vietnam War ended, many American couples chose to adopt the *bui doi* or children of the dust, the contemptuous Vietnamese term used to refer to Amerasians. Forgotten were the GI babies sired by American soldiers when they came to the Philippines on R&R.

Who knows, too, how many Filipino versions of "Miss Saigon's" love story unfolded? Besides soldiers, we also had musicians and civilians who were recruited to work in Saigon.

The links with the Vietnam war also opened the Philippines to an international drug trade. I remember hearing stories of Filipinos who came home after a stint in Vietnam hooked on drugs. But there was no problem of access when they returned because all kinds of drugs—downers, uppers, acid—were available in Manila, Olongapo and Angeles.

In the late 1960s, too, Filipino doctors began to talk about "Vietnam rose." No, it wasn't a new variety of the flower, but a strain of gonorrhea resistant to antibiotics. In fairness, the strains could easily have developed first in Angeles or Olongapo, rather than in Vietnam, but then this was a time of war, when people were always looking for scapegoats.

Overtaking the Philippines

After the Americans lost the war in Vietnam, the Philippines continued to play an important role, this time to receive refugees fleeing the new regime. For more than 20 years we maintained refugee camps, processing the papers of Vietnamese who wanted to migrate to the US and offering them English lessons and other skills they could use once they found a new home.

Eventually, the camps had to be closed down, but we graciously accepted the Vietnamese who could not leave for the West. In Puerto Princesa, Palawan, you feel their presence with Vietnamese restaurants offering *pho* (noodles), French bread and beef stew.

Manila, too, has *pho* restaurants, but I wish we could look at Vietnam beyond "Miss Saigon" and noodles. In the 1970s, Vietnam provided inspiration to our own activists with their fierce sense of independence. Today, the Vietnamese have opened up to the world with *doi moi*, their equivalent of China's hybrid capitalism and socialism. As part of this drive to modernize, Vietnamese students are being sent to neighboring countries, including the Philippines, to fast-track human resource development.

I've taught Vietnamese students in several international public health courses and they excel. I sometimes worry they'll overtake the Philippines and it's not because they're smarter or more hard-working. What they have is a sense of nationalism, an eagerness to learn from the world and to return to Vietnam so they can apply what they've picked up. We're seeing a replay of the 1960s and 1970s, when Thai students came to the Philippines to train in agriculture, business and the health sciences. They returned to Thailand and surged ahead. Today, Thailand exports their products to the Philippines and offer their universities as training centers (sometimes with Filipino professors) for Southeast Asia.

Nationalism isn't old-fashioned. The Thais proved that and, in a few years, the Vietnamese will, too, while we remain content with exporting our workers and waiting for the spoils of America's other imperial adventures.

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Ethics in entertainment media

IT is not often that one comes across a piece of good news in the daily paper. But Bayani San Diego Jr.'s brief article in the INQUIRER's Entertainment section (PDI, 4/22/05) about the Professional Artist Managers Inc.'s (Pami) move to promote "ethical entertainment journalism" was good news, indeed.

There have been groups of citizens in the private sector who recognize the harmful impact of media devoid of ethical standards. These groups help the youth develop critical thinking skills so that they become literate consumers of media.

However, their efforts do not suffice unless well-informed decisions are made by the entertainment, advertising and marketing managers and producers. We need critics and watchdogs in the field who are committed to careful observation and evaluation of the content, practices, trends and potential influences of their work even before these are produced and shown to the public.

The saying, "People only get what they want" is far too simplistic to address the dimensions of what constitutes media content. Decisions about what will be funded, produced, distributed and marketed call into play a myriad of factors—from morality to profitability.

If indeed the idea of "People only get what they want" is made to prevail in the choice of shows a station must air, then there would be no such phenomena as an excellent movie or a flop; neither would dissatisfaction be expressed by concerned citizens. That advertisers and producers give only what will sell is a clear indication of personal motives over common good and public interest.

Whose interests do the advertisements represent? How far should media industries work for profit, and are they to be motivated solely by it? There are many factors that define the type of content producers are willing to make.

While some people seek to be critical consumers of media, advertisers, models, show business people and managers must likewise be more attuned to what media projections say about themselves as individuals and members of the society. A thorough re-examination on this matter is long overdue. Pami's proposal for cooperation and dialogue with the country's leading advertising organizations and marketing outfits deserves to be supported.

—JENNIFER BERMUDEZ,
Ateneo Graduate School
of Humanities,
bermudezjennyc@yahoo.com

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER LETTERS

A beloved figure of our generation

WE were living in Cubao, Quezon City, when Doña Aurora Quezon was ambushed. She was a beloved figure to many Filipinos of our generation. I was then a high school freshman.

Yes, I remember the Philippine National Red Cross, and Doña Aurora's role in it. I will certainly light a candle and pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

—MAXIMO P. FABELLA,
1687 Gumtree Court,
Orange Park, FL. 32073,
mfabella1@aol.com

Price control on drugs needed

THE COLUMN of Neal Cruz last April 22, was really a knockout.

His title, "A kind grandpa," almost led me to skip it. Little did I realize when I read on that the surprise and excitement that I'd get every time I read his column were still there.

Cruz's column was actually a response to a letter sent by a certain Leo P. Wassmer Jr. of the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP) who was reacting to Cruz's earlier columns regarding the existence of a cartel in the pharmaceutical industry.

I had nothing but applause for Cruz in the manner he countered the defense of the PHAP. Any group trying to justify the unconscionable, unpardonable, heartless overpricing of drugs and medicines in this country, such as the PHAP, simply deserves the way Cruz treated it.

For one, if I may add to Cruz's reaction, the name of PHAP is already a misnomer. Why would a group composed of pharmaceutical companies be concerned about health care when all its members care about is how to maximize profits?

Secondly, if the PHAP really cares about the health and well-being of Filipinos, all it has to do is roll back the prices of medicines to realistic, if not affordable, levels.

And finally, how could we expect multinational pharmaceutical companies to care about the health of Filipinos when they are mostly foreigners doing business in the Philippines?

In my view, it's about time we, Filipinos, give a serious thought to the idea of price controls in drugs and medicines.

The prices are simply too much. The people can't take it anymore.

My suggestion is that Congress investigate the overpricing of drugs and medicines rather than waste so much time on non-relevant issues.

If I were President Macapagal-Arroyo, I would certify any bill in Congress calling for the imposition of controls in medicine prices and push for its passage as relentlessly as she is doing with the expanded VAT bill.

I can't help but wonder who is advising the President, or has she become insensitive to the sufferings of our people?

—ALLAN P. MORALES,
Filinvest Subd., QC,
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Oil price rollback, not martial law

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo doesn't need emergency powers to resolve the worsening energy crisis, particularly, the ever-rising prices of petroleum products. The President only needs political will to do what is best for the consumers already burdened by high oil prices. There is no need for emergency powers. Consumers are asking for an immediate oil price rollback, not martial law.

Once granted with emergency powers, President Arroyo is likely to arrest not the increasing oil prices imposed by the oil companies but those who stage the transport strikes and protest actions. President Arroyo needs to have a strong political will and determination in order to decisively put a stop to the unjust oil price hikes. Transport groups and various sectors are actually pointing out possible solutions to the oil price hike problem—the immediate scrapping of the Oil Deregulation Law and the imposition of regulations in the determination of oil prices. Taking these important steps will help effectively bring down the prices of petroleum products.

After the successful nationwide transport strikes and protest actions last April 18, which paralyzed almost 90 percent of the country's land transportation in Metro Manila and in the major provinces and urban centers, Malacañang is now bent on stopping protest actions that will further expose Ms Arroyo's brand of leadership. We hold her accountable for the excessive oil price hikes as the most number of oil price increases happened under her administration.

It is unfortunate that Malacañang is giving out wrong and untimely solutions to the people's problems after prodding the Department of Transportation and Communications and Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board to decide on the transport sector's fare hike petition. Fare hikes will cause more suffering to the people.

By further increasing transportation fares, the government will pass on the burden of high oil prices to the riding public and bail out oil companies from their accountability. Workers will not accept another round of fare hikes. We are encouraging the public to resist the continuing oil price hikes and demand higher wages for workers in various industries.

—JOSELITO USTAREZ,
executive vice president,
Kilusang Mayo Uno,
63 Narra St., Barangay Claro,
Project 3, Quezon City

Dark words

I AM an avid reader of the INQUIRER although I have to read it online now. (It was the only paper I trusted during my long stay in the Philippines until three years ago).

I am very glad that the media have described India as one of the two most powerful economies in Asia. Surprisingly, however, the INQUIRER editorial last April 17 mentioned that New Delhi (along with Beijing) is a past master at chanelling its peoples' passion in a specific direction, and Pakistan has been at the receiving end of this "dark art." The words "dark art" portray an evil and malicious intent on behalf of India against Pakistan. When nothing could be further from the truth.

India has long behaved with admirable restraint in border issues with Pakistan. A closer look at the past history of India and its relations with Pakistan makes it abundantly clear that India has always kept peace as the only option. However, it has not been willing to sacrifice its sovereignty and bow down to unjust demands.

The INQUIRER's choice of words on this question creates an impression of sinister doings by the Indian government in the minds of the newspaper's readers. I hope the INQUIRER will refrain from passing judgment and acknowledge this error.

—DEEPAK THADHANI,
asapshow@roltanet.com

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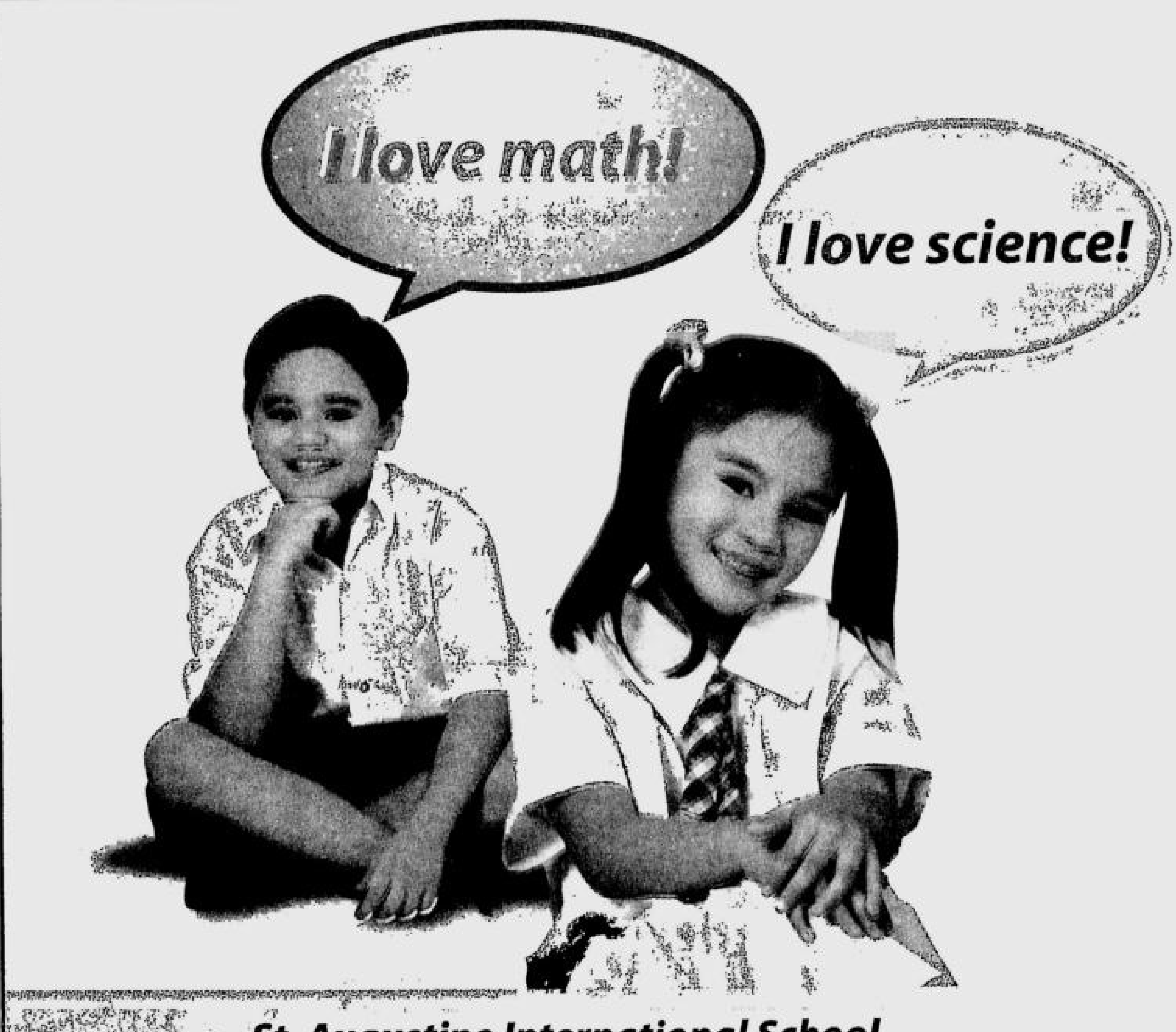
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ROUNDUP

Army officer wounded in clash

DAVAO CITY—An Army officer was wounded in a clash between government soldiers and the New People's Army (NPA) in Caraga, Davao Oriental, the military said Tuesday. Major Roberto Dumalahay, chief of the Army's 5th Civil Relations Group in Southern Mindanao, said the clash took place in Barangay Mercedes. Dumalahay said the victim, 2Lt. Vincent Macalam, a member of the 67th Infantry Battalion, was leading a team of soldiers in Sitio Sumalibay around 12:30 p.m. Sunday when they encountered more than 30 heavily armed rebels. The rebels, he said, retreated as reinforcement from the 105th Provincial Police Mobile Group, led by Senior Insp. Angel Sumagaysay, and the Caraga police station, led by Insp. Alfredo Pelovillo, arrived. Macalam was brought to the Manay District Hospital for treatment and was later transferred to the Camp Panacan Hospital in Davao City.

Anthony Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Police officer drowns in resort

BACACAY, Albay—A retired police officer died after he drowned in a resort here on Sunday morning. Senior Insp. Leonides Balderama, town chief of police, said Insp. Jose Bitancur, of Daraga, Albay, along with his family and friends, went to Viento De Mar Resort in Barangay Sogod for a picnic and swimming. While the victim was swimming, his companions noticed that he was drowning and immediately came to his rescue. Bitancur was rushed to the Ziga Memorial District Hospital in Tabaco City but was pronounced dead on arrival. Balderama said Bitancur availed of an early retirement due to an ailment. *Job Belen, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Bomb materials found in raid

CALAMBA, Laguna—Members of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) in Cavite confiscated almost two kilograms of ammonium nitrate used in manufacturing dynamites, 20,000 pieces of blasting caps and 100 pieces of detonating cord during a raid on a house in Tanza, Cavite over the weekend. Supt. Mario Sanga, CIDG-Calabarzon director, said his men swooped down on the residence of businessman Melchor Gonzaga in Purok 5, Barangay Julugan just before dawn on Saturday after receiving reports that a shipment of explosive chemicals from Cebu was delivered in the area. He said the operation was covered by a search warrant issued by Judge Cesar Mangrobang of the Branch 20 of the Imus Regional Trial Court.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Fire hits Mount Cristobal

LUCENA CITY—A six-hour fire burned a 7-hectare portion of Mount Cristobal on Saturday afternoon, said Manny Calayag, Dolores municipal environment and natural resources officer. The fire started at around 3 p.m. and lasted until 9 p.m. The forest blaze was caused by either slash-and-burn farmers and honeybee gatherers, he said.

Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

RP to stay on high alert for bird flu, says DOH

DAVAO CITY—While other countries are reeling from bird flu, the Philippine government wants to make sure it has more than enough measures to prevent the virus from entering the country.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said while the country remains clear of the virus strain that has hit neighboring Asian countries and parts of the world, the spread of the virus, however, remains to be a threat to reckon with.

"The threat is already there, although external," Dayrit said.

Aside from the Philippines, only Singapore and Brunei remains free from the spread of the bird flu, according to Dayrit.

A new measure was introduced during Monday's Bird Flu Summit here.

The measure will involve the local government units and the private sector.

"We want to alert the LGUs," he said.

He said the county will be divided into seven or nine zones, so that when one zone is affected, say Mindanao, it will be contained or isolated from the rest of the zones.

This approach, which will be jointly undertaken by the Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Agriculture (DA), was dubbed Avian Influenza Protection Program (AIPP).

Mindanao, Dayrit said, is close to the potential danger of being exposed to the virus as this is near to affected countries like Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam.

But he said the country is still prepared.

Jean-Marc Olive, a representative of the World Health Organization, warned against importation of live animals from the affected countries.

He said it would be difficult to stop the outbreak once it enters the country.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap also echoed Dayrit's call in taking steps to protect the agriculture sector from the onslaught of the virus.

But while the outbreak is a misery to other countries, the Philippines seized it as a window of opportunity for economic improvement.

Ruben Pascual, chair of the Philippine Poultry Export Board, said because of the bird flu, the demand for chicken from the Philippines went up.

Pascual said Japan has been demanding more chicken meat from the Philippines since the outbreak. *Dennis Jay Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Court orders hotel to pay ₱5M in electric bills

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—The court has ordered Northwest Tourism, the company that owns Asiaworld Resort Hotel, to pay the Palawan Electric Cooperative close to P5 million for unpaid electricity charges as of Oct. 9, 2002.

Aside from the electricity charges, Northwest is also obliged to pay P1 million in attorney's fees and P100,000 for litigation expenses.

According to the decision handed down by Judge Jocelyn Sundiang-Dilig of the Regional Trial Court Branch 47, Northwest became a member of Paleco in 1990 when it started operating in Puerto Princesa.

However, the hotel had failed to pay its electric bills which, as of Oct. 9, 2002, had reached about P5 million.

On June 2001, Northwest was able to make partial payments to Paleco.

From November 2001 to May 2002, representatives of Asiaworld requested reconsideration.

On July 31, 2002, Paleco and Northwest signed a memorandum of agreement authorizing Paleco, through general manager Ponciano Payuyo, to sell and use as collateral for a loan a piece of property owned by Northwest in Canigaran, Puerto Princesa City, so that the company could pay its bills.

The agreement also stated that Northwest would pay Paleco from the proceeds of the loan.

But the agreement lapsed without Northwest giving the authorization to Paleco.

In October 2002, after failing to get anything from Northwest, Paleco cut the power supply of the hotel.

The cooperative later sued the hotel for collection and applied for a temporary restraining order.

As a result, the court ordered Northwest, represented by its vice president for administration, Angel Tolentino, to permanently refrain from selling or encumbering the property in Canigaran, except with the consent of Paleco.

The court also ordered Northwest to execute an authorization allowing Paleco to use as collateral the land in any loan and to pay Paleco from the proceeds of the loan.

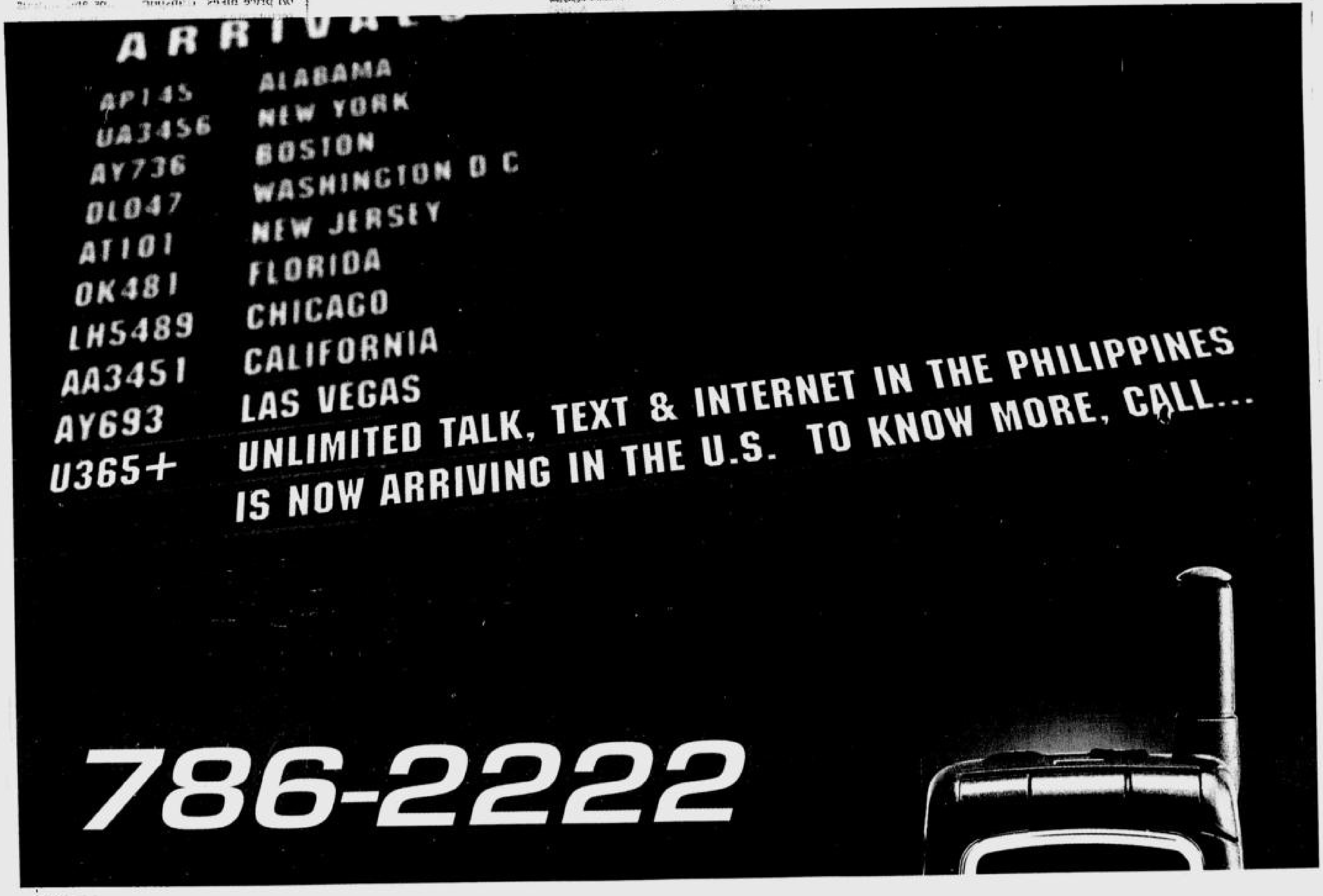
It also gave an option to Northwest to pay Paleco from any of its funds, whichever comes earlier.

Northwest bought the property, which used to be Rafols Hotel, from the Rafols family in 1991.

The property later became the Asiaworld Resort Hotel, which was the only five-star hotel in Palawan.

It closed down two or three years ago without clear reasons.

Jofelle Tesorio, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau



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Benguet farmers still wary of veggie imports

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—Provincial officials heaved a sigh of relief when a Philippine-China trade agreement, which covered vegetables and other items, was not one of the documents signed during last week's visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to the country.

But they remain skeptical that the signing of the bilateral trade agreement will push through. They fear that backroom negotiations are going on between Philippine and Chinese trade and agriculture officials.

They said the administration is bound to have the agreement signed since President Macapagal-Arroyo now feels politically indebted to the Chinese government after Hu approved loans worth $1.6 billion to fund infrastructure and mining projects in the Philippines.

Gov. Borromeo Melchor and provincial board member John Kim attributed the deferment of the trade pact's approval to the failure of the agriculture department to get the endorsement of farmers on the controversial pest risk analysis (PRA) on carrots conducted by the Bureau of Plant Industry.

The BPI received a lot of flak when it recommended the importation of Chinese carrots despite detecting 12 pests and nine diseases in its PRA.

Plant experts at the Benguet State University questioned the PRA, saying the entry of such pests and diseases would endanger the country's agricultural ecosystem.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, Kim said, officially announced the scrapping of the PRA during last week's National Vegetable Congress held in Cebu City.

"There will be no PRA to be approved unless a new one is conducted by BPI, together with representatives of farmers, stakeholders, non-government organizations and experts from different research and academic institutions," Kim quoted Yap as saying.

Melchor said the province must remain vigilant despite Yap's pronouncement of a new PRA.

"Let us see if a new PRA will really be conducted," he said. "We hope that Yap was sincere when he said that a multisectoral group would be assembled to study carrot importation."

Kim shared Melchor's sentiments. Although the bilateral trade agreement was not signed, he said he knew that Philippine and Chinese agricultural experts would work overtime to have the pact approved.

"The flow of investments and loans promised during Hu's visit will create a political pressure on our government to reciprocate," he said.

Allowing the entry of Chinese carrots into the local market to be justified by the bilateral trade agreement would just be too tempting as a payback, Kim said.

He added that judging from several memorandums of understanding signed last week by Trade Secretary Juan Santos and Chinese Minister of Commerce Bo Xilai, the groundwork for the eventual signing of the bilateral trade agreement was already in place.

Reports said the two officials signed documents focusing on trade and investment cooperation. The packages include exploring potential exchanges in agriculture, quarantine, sanitary standards, conformity assessment and intellectual property rights.

The areas mentioned in the documents will necessarily cover carrots and other vegetables in future agreements on importation. *Delmar Cariño, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Judge delays decision on shooting of reporter

LEGAZPI CITY—Judge Vladimir Brusola, presiding judge of the Regional Trial Court Branch 6 of the 5th Judicial Region, yesterday postponed the promulgation of his decision on the attempted murder case filed by the late radio broadcaster Ruel Endrinal against Jovellar Mayor Jose Arcangel, saying he had not finished the case yet.

The case was docketed as Criminal Case 9230 (People of the Philippines vs Jose Arcangel) for attempted murder of Endrinal.

Brusola reset the promulgation on Tuesday next week.

The unexpected postponement dashed hopes of Endrinal's bereaved family for the speedy decision of the more than five-year-old case.

Spectators, including mediamen who attended the hearing, were both irritated and disappointed for it was Brusola himself who admitted the lack of time and preparation for his decision on the case.

"We really felt so down because we thought we could already attain some justice here, aside from fighting continuously my husband's other pending case (murder case against the suspected hitman in Endrinal's killing in February 2004). We really hope that this will not be postponed again this coming May 10, as we still feel unsecured at this very point in time," Endrinal's wife, Marina, told the INQUIRER.

Endrinal was shot on Oct. 10, 1999 after a heated discussion with Arcangel.

People who had witnessed the shooting, including some of Endrinal's friends in the media, directly pointed to Arcangel as the one who shot him.

A Volunteer Against Crime and Corruption (VACC) member, who requested anonymity, said "what happened was a mere manifestation of incompetence in the justice system—that justice delayed is justice denied."

But Brusola promised that the postponement was a big preparation for whatever decision he may have in the next scheduled hearing.

This case, he said, must not be rushed.

"It's really sad for this case is an attempted homicide with a primary suspect and it happened five years ago. But we will continue the fight," Endrinal's wife added.

Albay has the most killed journalists as recorded by the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines. *Gil Francis Arevalo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

STONE AGE V ESPIRITU/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Robert Duguyen displays his indigenous scooter, a contraption crudely carved from wood and which he rode on in a 5-km race that he won with a time of 3 minutes. Ifugao ingenuity has been hailed internationally because of the ancient rice terraces.

If previous pages caused hyperacidity, this page can take it out

Stress, a big contributor to Hyperacidity

By KATRINA PRIMAVERA

NO NEWS is good news. Distressing current events may not only cause your blood pressure to shoot up but it may also be a reason for your acids to act up. Stress is but one of the many factors that contribute to hyperacidity. Smoking, physical exertion, irregular eating habits, dramatic weight gain, lying down too soon after a meal and pregnancy hormones are also common causes of a hyperacidity attack. Hyperacidity happens when there is an excessive secretion of acid in the stomach. It is not a disease but rather a collection of symptoms, including discomfort or burning in the upper abdomen which may also cause nausea. For relief from these discomforts, the most common over-the-counter remedy is an antacid.

Different terms and varying degrees of hyperacidity

HYPERACIDITY, locally known as *pangangasim ng sikmura*, is the excessive secretion of hydrochloric acid in the stomach. This imbalance causes a burning sensation or a slight churning in the stomach, which could also involve the esophagus and part of the small intestines.

Peptic ULCERS: refer to actual open sores or "wounds" in the inner lining of the stomach or small intestine or esophagus. Many ulcers result in a gnawing pain in the stomach and are caused by a bacteria called H. pylori. Other causes or factors which may aggravate ulcers include long term use of certain pain relievers, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption and stress. While over-the-counter medications may relieve the pain of ulcers, a doctor should be consulted so that proper treatment directed at healing the ulcer can be started.

INDIGESTION ("dyspepsia"). This is a general term often used to describe a collection of uncomfortable abdominal symptoms which often occur after eating. The cause of indigestion can't be attributed to one particular thing and is often times not serious. This includes discomfort or burning in the upper abdomen, nausea and a bloated feeling that belching may relieve. This can stem from a temporary problem such as overeating or a stressful event rather than relating it to a disease. It is a common disorder of the upper gastrointestinal system which includes the esophagus, stomach and the first part of the small intestine. The proper diet, exercise, stress management and anti-acid medications can all help with the symptoms.

HEARTBURN. When the lower sphincter valve of the esophagus relaxes or is weak, stomach acid can flow back up into the esophagus and irritate the esophagus resulting in "heartburn". The sensation is similar to regurgitation while experiencing a sour taste in the mouth and leaving a burning sensation behind the breastbone. Acid regurgitation or reflux can even cause hoarseness of the voice , coughing, and worsening of asthma.

TREATMENT. For quick acid neutralization, New Mylanta Rolltabs (CALCIUM CARBONATE + MAGNESIUM HYDROXIDE). Mylanta Rolltabs comes in chewable and great tasting flavors to aid in the rapid neutralization of acid to start relief in seconds. It's portable and comes in different flavors giving you sweet relief in no time, anytime. Don't forget to consult your doctor if symptoms persist, are severe, or keep recurring. Some of the things which may aggravate or result in heartburn; Stress, smoking, tight clothing, physical exertion, weight gain, lying down too soon after a meal and pregnancy.

Hyperacidity Tales

" I love coffee. I used to have 7-10 cups a day. Thing is with coffee, I would lose my appetite and end up skipping meals so I would get the worst hyperacidity attacks. I would feel as if there was this big ball burning inside my tummy." -Paul, 25

"Grabe ang hyperacidity ko. Pasulpot sulpot na lang. Para sa akin dumarating na lang yan ng walang warning. May isang beses naglalakad lang ako sa daan tapos may naramdaman akong sakit na biglaan sa tiyan. Ang tindi at ang lakas ng tama, napaupo ako sa daan bigla." -Lawrence, 24

"Ang pinakamatindi kong hyperacidity attack ay nung kumain ako ng manggang hilaw sa umaga. Hindi pa ako nag-aalmusal, so wala pang laman tiyan ko. Ay ang sakit talaga." -Mia, 24

" Hyperacidity is such a hassle. The worst part about it is that you never know when it's gonna hit you. There was this one time I was out with my girl friends and started getting spasms in my stomach. At first, I thought it was just gas or something I ate but the pain got worse as I was having my drinks. So not only did I have to pass up on the drinks, the pain became unbearable so I went home and missed out on what would have been a perfectly good night out." -Karen, 35

"I would get acidic once in a while but for some reason, it's more frequent and more intense during exam week. Things are a little bit more busy at that time. I like to go out kasi. Hanging with the boys and spending time with my girlfriend so tendency is for me to study last minute. I think the

CONT...

cramming and the pressure just aggravates my hyperacidity. Stress, you know?" -Joey 17,

"Hindi ako familiar sa mga sakit na ganyan. Basta iniisip ko lagi, lilipas lang yan. Pero may isang beses na nakaranas ako ng sakit sa tiyan. Ay, kakaiba talaga. Hindi ko siya maipinta. Parang may mainit at mahapding bulateng umiikot sa loob ng tiyan ko. Sinubukan kong itulog pero sa tindi ng sakit, hindi ako makatulog. Akala ko nagkaka-dysmenorrhea na ko , pero sus, hyperacidity pala siya" -Tiffany, 24

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor **Jun Bandayrel**
Bureau Chief **Rolando B. Fernandez**

A BAGUIO resident enjoys a summer splash at Burnham Park. EV ESPIRITU

Is Baguio City losing its allure?

By Delmar Cariño
Baguio City

TRAVEL agencies nowadays find it difficult promoting Baguio City, the summer capital, as part of a travel tour.

They say that, business-wise, packaging a city tour is practically pointless. While travelers still ask about the mountain resort city, they end up choosing brochures of other destinations.

"The reason is obvious," said Catherine de la Rosa, president of the local chapter of the National Association of Independent Travel Agencies of the Philippines (Naita). "Baguio has slowly and simply lost its natural luster as a prime tourist destination."

Baguio has been experiencing its worst tourism decline since the 1990 earthquake. Cited as culprit is the negative publicity allegedly generated by news reports about the city's pollution problem, it being a potential target of terrorist attack, deaths caused by meningococcemia, the water shortage, and the slur created by a Tagaytay website.

The situation, though, is not hopeless, De la Rosa said, since the city's remaining attributes could still be harnessed to salvage its image and reputation.

De la Rosa, who runs Noants Travel Agency, is a member of the task force that formulated a recovery program for Baguio. (The program was unveiled before city officials recently.) Noants is one of the 13 travel agencies in Baguio belonging to the 800-member Naita.

De la Rosa said tourists had not been receptive to a sales blitz for the city compared to those for Boracay, Palawan or Cebu.

"Travel agencies can package or sell Kota Kinabalu in Malaysia for as low as US$99 or Boracay at fairly reasonable prices, but we find it hard to do the same for Baguio," she said.

Bad publicity

De la Rosa, a former operations manager of Philippine Airlines' tourism department, said travel agencies looked beyond bad publicity as the main cause of the dip in Baguio tourist arrivals.

"The news about the city that may have been unfavorable should serve as a wake-up call for the people to unite and work on rebuilding its image," she said.

"The city's rapid growth in business and population has outlived its standards. The city has to simply respond to the demands of urbanization," she said.

De la Rosa said this growth had affected the city's ability to maintain peace and order, and sanitation. "More than the sights, tourists look up to the equivalent of their tour money in terms of security, cleanliness and the hospitality of the residents," she said.

While Baguio might be hard to sell, it did not mean that tourists totally avoided the city, she said. "There are still who want a package tour, but there are more who just travel to Baguio on their own without buying from travel agencies."

Saying that other tourist destinations were already competing with the city, De la Rosa said "it becomes frustrating to market and sell the city when as a product, it has not been taken care of."

Artist offers work for typhoon victims

WHILE leafing through the INQUIRER's pages recently, Baguio-based artist Benhur Villanueva noticed a photograph of donors to the Sagip Buhay project of the Catholic Media Network and the INQUIRER for typhoon victims of Infanta, Quezon.

"WORKING Mother," bronze sculpture by Benhur Villanueva. EV ESPIRITU

Villanueva, the sculptor of the 20-inch "Kapit Bisig" narra trophy given by then President Corazon Aquino to the heroes of the Edsa Revolution during its first anniversary in 1987, said he, too, would want to contribute to the efforts in helping the typhoon victims.

"When I saw the picture, I thought that, as a visual artist, I could do something to help the people," he said.

He then rummaged through his pile of sculptures at the Arko ni Apo Gallery that his family owns in Quezon Hill in Baguio and found a 2004 bronze piece, "Working Mother."

Villanueva said he would offer the piece for auction and donate the proceeds to Sagip Buhay. The piece depicts a woman carrying piles of firewood.

"The sculpture is my tribute to the mothers who work hard to make ends meet for their family. It is also my tribute to the mothers who lost their children after the typhoon and to the mothers who struggled and fought to survive the tragedy," Villanueva said.

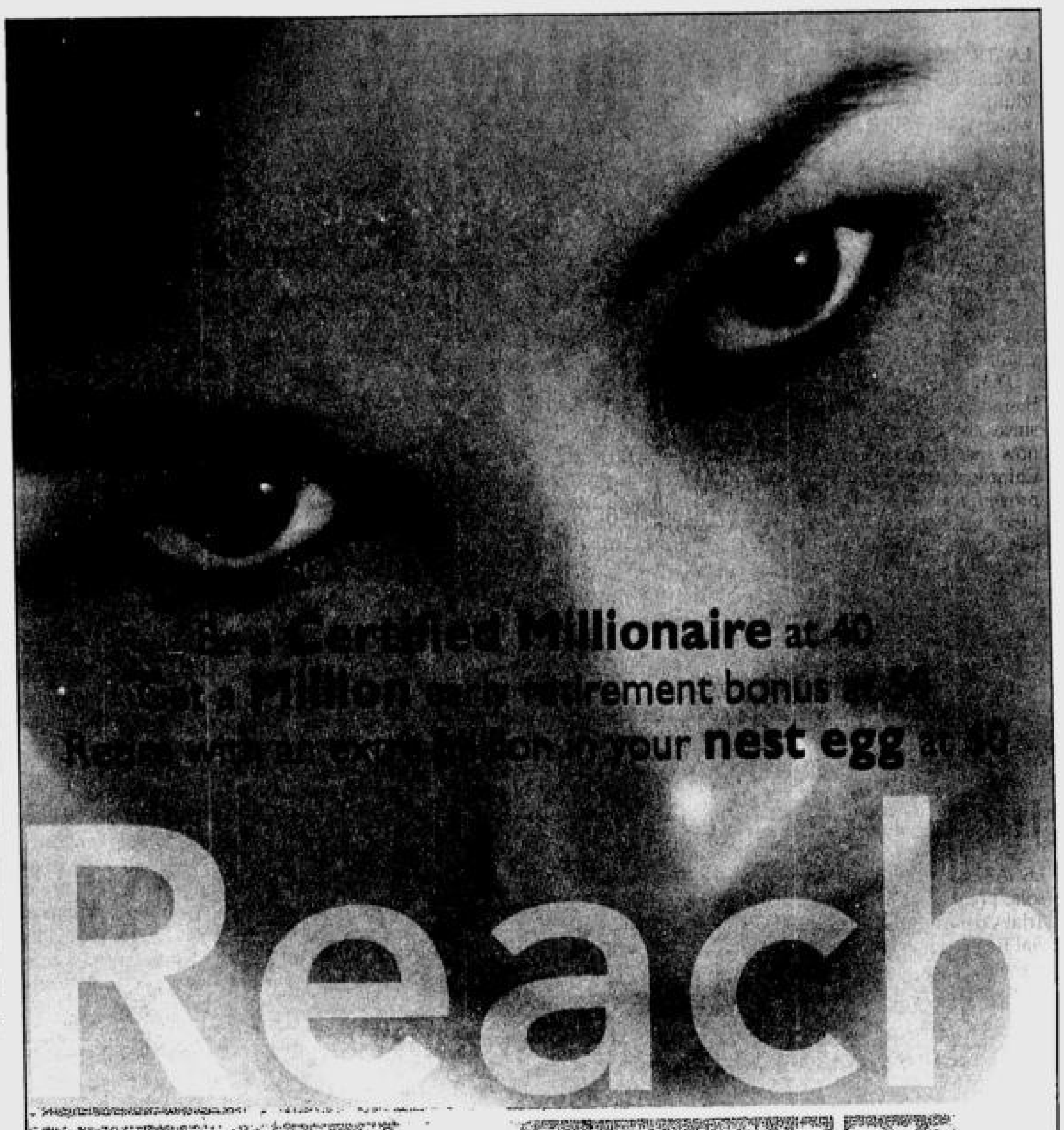
He said he would donate the piece to the fund drive organizers and would leave it to them to auction it.

"I believe that no matter how small or big is the amount, [this] could still help. As a visual artist, this is my [contribution]," he said.

Villanueva was a gold medalist in the Art Association of the Philippines' 33rd art competition. He heads the Society of Philippine Sculptors.

He retired as an art teacher from the Ateneo de Manila University, where he taught for 30 years, and became a full-time artist in 1992. He relocated to Baguio with his family.

Desiree Caluza



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Bulacan folk block dumping of garbage

By Carmela Reyes
PDI Central Luzon Desk

OBANDO, Bulacan—Determined to stop the operation of a dump in Barangay Tanza here, hundreds of residents and fishermen rowed their boats to block the entry of a barge that carried wastes from Navotas and other areas of Metro Manila.

For over a week now, residents have been barricading the Salambao and Binuangan rivers leading to Barangay Tanza, the dump of the Navotas controlled disposal facility (NCDF) that, they said, has been polluting their area for three years now.

Since the barricade that started on April 25, garbage has been diverted to a dump in Montalban, Rizal, according to Romy Hidalgo, president of the Bulacan, Malabon, Navotas Pwersa Kontra Basura, a group that has been opposing the NCDF operation.

He said 500 to 700 fishermen in bancas and motorboats blocked the entry to the NCDF barge in the middle of the river.

They also displayed streamers calling on officials to close the dump and to clean up the coastal villages.

The Eco Waste Coalition said it would continue the blockade until the NCDF was closed.

Mayor Zoilito Santiago, however, called the move illegal, saying there is no law that stops the passage of the barge along the river and the dumping of garbage in NCDF.

He said the town council is amending a municipal ordinance that prevents the entry of garbage barges from Manila.

Last year, the council approved an ordinance preventing the dumping of garbage in the Obando River. Santiago, however, said this ordinance is no longer applied today after a Bulacan regional trial court judge favored the petition of NCDF contractor calling for a temporary restraining order.

Soldiers dig up remains of NPA guerrillas

By Chito A. Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

ALICIA, Bohol—Army soldiers dug up on Friday the skeletal remains of two New People's Army (NPA) rebels who died in what soldiers said was a clash between two guerrilla groups nearly four years ago.

"Based on our intelligence reports, they were killed in a misencounter between two rebel units sometime in 2001," said Col. Eric Uchida, head of the Philippine Army's 15th Infantry Battalion based in Candijay town, Bohol.

Uchida proceeded to two separate burial sites on Friday accompanied by representatives of government agencies.

The first burial site was discovered on April 27 while the second was found two days later. A former rebel located the two burial sites with the help of local guides.

Lt. Alex Domingo, 15th IB's Alpha company chief, said they started digging the shallow graves to make sure the skeletal remains were still there before informing Uchida about them.

"Our informants have been talking about this mis-encounter but we could not locate the graves until now," Domingo explained at the burial site.

SOLDIERS dig up the remains of two rebels killed in 2001 and whose bodies were buried in a remote village in Candijay, Bohol.

CHITO FUENTES/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

The first skeletal remains, said to be those of Ka Renante, was dug up in Sitio Cabahis, Barangay Cagongcagong, about 10 km from Alicia town.

The remains were wrapped in a plastic sack and were buried about three feet deep.

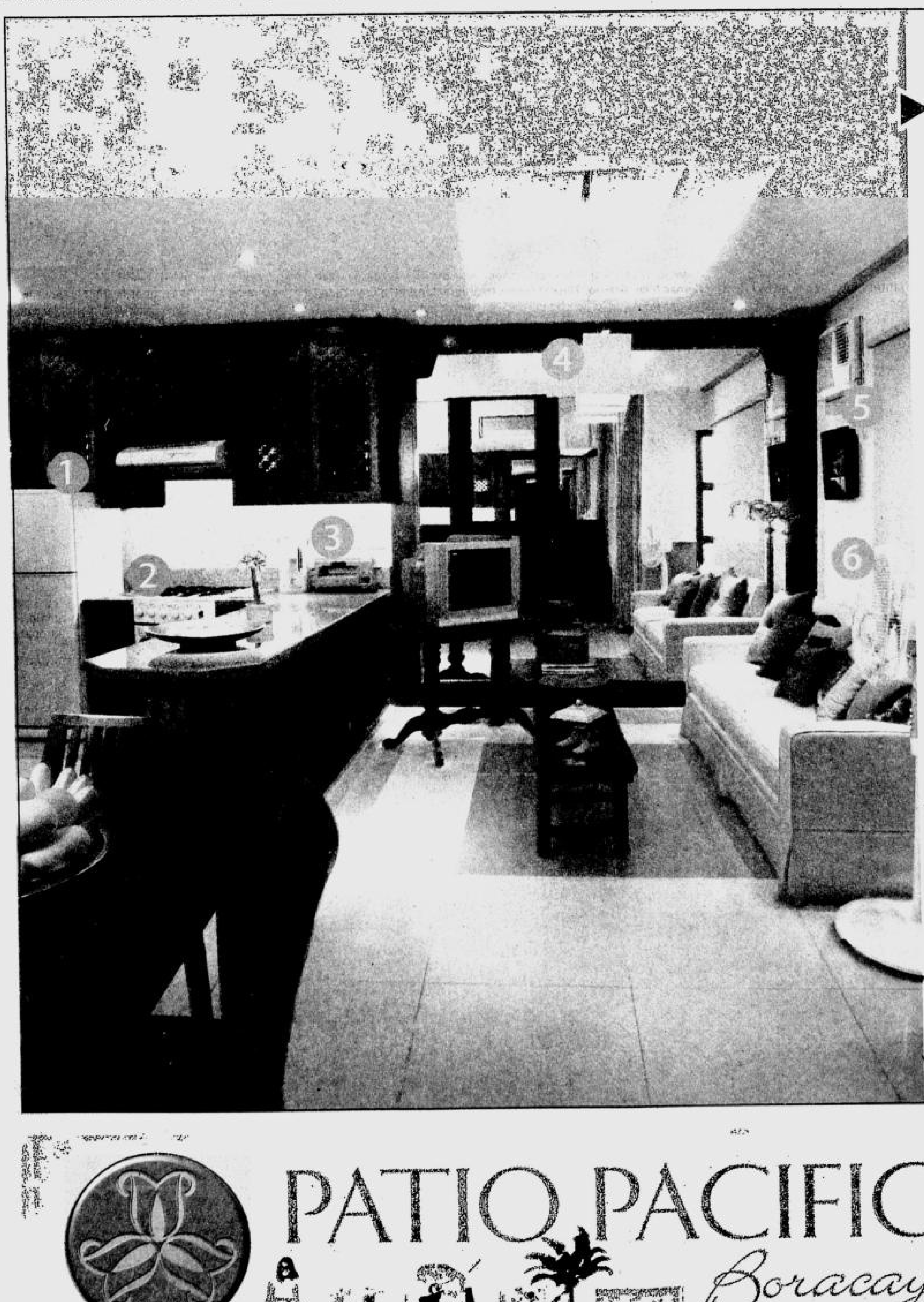
The second was found at the foot of a hill in a forested area about a kilometer away in Sitio Mandaluyong in neighboring Barangay Sudlon. Buried less than two feet deep, the bones were inside a hammock commonly used by rebels.

According to Army sources, the second fatality was the brother of militant activists based in a neighboring town.

The skeletal remains of the two rebels were brought back to the Alicia municipal hall.

Alicia Mayor Bienvenido Molina, a doctor, ordered his employees to spray the remains with disinfectant before placing them in wooden coffins.

"We will wait for a week. If the remains are not claimed, we will give them proper burial," Molina said.



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‘Jueteng’ lords dish out ₱13B in bribes–bishop

From page A1

Allegations that he received massive payoffs from jueteng lords spurred the impeachment of then President Joseph Estrada and triggered his ouster in a popular uprising in 2001.

Asked who the alleged jueteng beneficiaries were, Cruz said: "This concerns national officials. By and large, we have found out, without being presumptuous and with apologies to the PNP officials present, a good number of payola go to that direction."

110 percent sure

"But the PNP officials have their own beneficiaries," Cruz added.

He said he was "110 percent" sure about the names on the list and 95 percent sure about the amount of jueteng funds they paid.

Cruz, head of the Krusada ng Bayan Laban sa Jueteng and former president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, said that the collection of jueteng payola remained "centralized" and went up to the national level.

"But I didn't say that this involves the President," he told reporters.

P20-M payola monthly

National officials alone received, as of March 15, a P20-million monthly payola "per province," Cruz said.

He said that the "14 or 15 jueteng lords" whose names were submitted to the committee operated in 24 provinces in Northern, Central and Southern Luzon.

Some of them control jueteng operations in two or three provinces, he said.

He refused to divulge their names but added that some were local officials. There were no policemen or national officials among them, he added.

Need to validate data

When asked after the hearing if the list included the three relatives of a top government official—whom a Philippine National Police official had identified in the INQUIRER report by their code names of M1, M2 and J$7—Cruz said his group had yet to confirm the identities of the trio.

Asked if Representative Arroyo's name had come up in their investigation of the "top 3" alleged beneficiaries, Cruz said: "That is what media is saying but we have not verified that. *Pahapyaw lang* (There was just a hint). We have to validate the data of our sources."

He said he submitted the list to the lawmakers so that the authorities could verify the names on the list and take the necessary action.

Representative Arroyo questioned Cruz's claims and his group's list, particularly the credibility of his sources.

Arroyo counter-attacks

He said that it seemed that Cruz's group did not gather its information scientifically and that it only amounted to hearsay and rumors.

He added that Cruz had once been mistaken when he claimed that Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. employees had acted as guest relations officers during First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo's birthday bash in June last year. The congressman noted that Cruz was even charged with libel by Pagcor employees for making that claim.

The bishop, however, maintained that he was correct on both the jueteng and Pagcor controversies, adding that he had separate sources for the two claims.

"And I don't listen to hearsay and rumors. I have other things to do," Cruz said.

Are they ghosts?

"The only thing we marvel [at] is that everybody knows them [the jueteng lords], even my barber, but they seem to be ghosts [to the government]," he said.

Cruz said the sources for his group's jueteng findings came from both private and public officials, some of them even national police officials.

Krusada has 62 chapters nationwide which helped in information gathering, he added.

"Our sources are second-hand. They are not within the jueteng circles. However, they include high-ranking members of the PNP who themselves feel guilt about this," Cruz said.

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POLICE outnumber protesters at the rally of the urban poor near the LTA Building in Makati City, which is owned by First Gentleman Mike Arroyo. The rally seeks to draw attention to the alleged involvement of the Arroyos in jueteng operations and its "cover-up" by the government. JOSEPH AGCOILI

"But whether outside or inside government, the sum total of the information and their responses are substantially the same," the bishop said.

Asked how he felt about Arroyo's line of questioning, Cruz said: "It's OK. I'm not offended. I have no problem with that."

‘A good man’

"He's a good man," Cruz said, and then laughed.

While the House hearing was being held, an urban poor group held a rally to demand an investigation of those involved in the payoffs.

"If we criticized Estrada before, we must also slam them for the wrong that they are doing against people," said Kadamay chair Carmen Deunida, referring to the current jueteng beneficiaries.

Reviving Jose Pidal

Among other things, Kadamay called for an "impartial and serious" investigation into the Jose Pidal accounts, the subject of a series of exposés by Sen. Panfilo Lacson in 2003 which had targetted the First Gentleman.

Lacson had accused Ms Arroyo's husband of using the Pidal accounts to allegedly launder some P200 million campaign contributions for the President. The First Gentleman strongly denied the allegation, which has remained unsubstantiated.

Deunida also called for a probe into the alleged P5.8-million payoff Arroyo had supposedly given to whistle-blower Mary "Rosebud" Ong to discredit Lacson.

The group gathered around 11:30 a.m. on the corner of Perea Street and Paseo de Roxas in Makati's Central Business District.

They were supposed to march a few meters to Perea Street to hold their rally near the Lourdes Tuazon Arroyo Building.

But they were met by 130 policemen from the Southern Police District's Civil Disturbance Management Group and officers from the Makati Police Department, who blocked them.

Unholy Trinity

"We just received reports that a group is going to hold a rally here, so we fielded our officers. We are here just to prevent them from disrupting business establishments around here," said Supt. Efren Ysulat, Makati's deputy police chief.

Carrying placards calling three relatives of Ms Arroyo "The Unholy Trinity," the protesters held a peaceful 30-minute rally.

‘Untouchable’

"We cannot say that we are surprised at the government's lack of eagerness to pursue an investigation on the matter since they are closely related to President Macapagal-Arroyo and, thus, like the mafia, are untouchables" said Deunida.

The group dispersed peacefully at noon. *Tarra V. Quismundo*

Senior cop refuses promotion

From page A1

spoke on condition of anonymity, told reporters, referring to the Bicol region.

Albano, the outgoing PNP commander for Region 3 based in Central Luzon, could not be reached for comment. He had left his quarters and had apparently turned his phone off when the INQUIRER tried to reach him yesterday.

Church people and other PNP officials have pointed to Central Luzon and Bicol as among the areas in the country where "jueteng" has flourished despite government pledges to stamp out the illegal numbers game.

Said to be a multibillion-peso-a year industry, jueteng has been a source of huge monthly payoffs for its supposed protectors.

The official said Albano, a one-star officer, had been lined up for a two-star job in Camp Crame.

"He will head the directorate for research and development. That's considered a promotion," the official said.

Major reshuffle

But another senior PNP official said that to a field officer in charge of a regional command, being assigned to head a research unit in Camp Crame was not all that tempting a job.

Bicol—where Albano supposedly wanted to go—is actually a plum post and whoever heads the PNP command there will have more clout than if he were supervising a little known office, like research, in Crame.

Two other PNP officials also said that Chief Supt. Restituto Mosqueda, set to retire this month, had been lobbying to hold on to his post as PNP commander in Bicol.

"The PNP chief (Director General Arturo Lomibao) was told that if his request is entertained, there would not only be ripples but possibly an upheaval from below," one of the officials said, adding that Lomibao did not intend to entertain the request.

Mosqueda keen on retiring

Reached in Legazpi City, Mosqueda vehemently denied that he was lobbying to retain his post.

Mosqueda said he had no intention of staying on beyond his birthday on May 6, although some political leaders reportedly had asked Malacañang to keep him for another six months.

Mosqueda said he was looking forward to going back to his native town where his family has a mango plantation. He refused to name the place.

"I want to spend my remaining years with my family, relatives and townmates," he said.

An official source said the shakeup of the regional commands would be part of Lomibao's first major reshuffle of the PNP since assuming command in March.

In the projected revamp, Metro Manila's top cop, Deputy Director General Avelino Razon, would move over to Camp Crame as chief of the directorial staff, a senior police official said.

The forthcoming retirements of Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco, the deputy chief for administration (DCA), on May 22 and Director Robert Delfin, the chief of the Directorate for Intelligence, on May 21 would trigger the revamp.

Other movements

Razon will either replace Calderon, currently the PNP's chief of staff, or become deputy chief for operations, a post currently held by Deputy Director General Ricardo de Leon, according to the official, who asked not to be identified.

Either De Leon or Calderon would become the DCA, he said.

Director Vidal Querol, chief of Region 9, would most likely replace Razon as chief of the National Capital Region Police Office, the source said.

The other possible changes include:

- Director Simeon Dizon, chief of Region 11, to replace Delfin as chief of the Directorate for Intelligence;
- Chief Supt. Alex Lapinid, former head of the Mimaropa (Mindoro-Marinduque-Romblon-Palawan Region) to replace Albano in Region 3;
- Supt. Eduardo Doromal, chief of the Police Security and Protection Office, to replace Mosqueda in Bicol;
- Chief Supt. Wilfredo Garcia, chief of the Southern Police District, to go to Region 12;
- Chief Supt. Antonio Billones, chief of Region 12, to replace Dizon in Region 11. *With reports from Gil Francis Arevalo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Survey says the poor becoming desperate

From page A1

jobs in other countries, down from 29 percent last October.

Those who said the poor would pray and hope that God would help them also went down, from 35 percent last October to 25 percent in March.

Significant increase

Significantly, the perception that the "hopeless poor" were likely to support groups that seek to overthrow or change the government increased by 14 points among those in Class E.

"The spread in the perception that the poor are likely to resort to criminal or subversive activities could be due to observation or a sense of increasing crime and lawlessness in the respondents' localities," Tabunda said.

She said a majority of the poor would still resort to positive measures such as looking for work abroad and praying when there seemed to be no hope of escaping poverty.

"But a third of them think that the poor in such a situation will engage in illegal livelihood activities or support subversive activities," Tabunda said.

Family source of hope

Filipinos across all economic classes tend to turn primarily to the family rather than the government as a source of hope, according to Tabunda.

She said Filipinos would consider the condition of the poor hopeless when not even one member of the family had a job (34 percent), when the family was not able to eat regularly or adequately (24 percent), or when the children of the poor could not finish their studies (23 percent).

The percentage of Filipinos citing inadequate food for the family as an indication that the poor had no hope of escaping poverty rose 7 percentage points since October.

Pulse Asia said those in Mindanao and those belonging to the D and E economic classes registered a big increase, from 21 percent to 31 percent, from 14 percent to 28 percent and from 17 percent to 29 percent, respectively.

Only 16 percent of the respondents said there was hope for the poor if the government did not respond to the needs and problems of the poor.

Different pattern

Pulse Asia observed a different pattern in October 2004 when government responsiveness was deemed by 34 percent of the respondents to be a source of hope for the poor to escape poverty.

There had since been significant declines in this view among those in Luzon and the Visayas and among the D and E classes.

"It will be recalled that this change in perception was accompanied by a significant decline in approval for the national administration's poverty reduction efforts. The lack of jobs and the unsuccessful attempts of the national administration to reduce inflation may have contributed to the sense that government cannot help escape poverty," Tabunda said.

Jobs

Still, those surveyed thought that if government was to solve the problem of poverty, it must ensure the availability of jobs (38 percent) and of adequate supply of food at affordable prices (25 percent).

Using a multistage probability sampling, the survey covered 1,200 respondents nationwide and had a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

Field interviews were conducted from Oct. 22 to Nov. 6, 2004, for the first survey and from March 3 to 16 for the second stage. *Alcuin Papa*

PUTTING ON the ugly face of a debt-ridden nation for the rally on Tuesday of the Freedom from Debt Coalition which marched to Congress to protest the Napocor rate increases. JOAN BONDOC

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Warden okays gang's party

By Fran Katigbak

THERE was no resistance from the Pasay City Jail warden when Sigue-Sigue Sputnik gang inmates held a party for the group's anniversary.

Supt. Mariano Andres said celebrating the gang's anniversary had been a tradition observed in prisons nationwide.

"We risk a riot if the prisoners are denied this simple party," he added.

About 150 inmates and their immediate families joined the five-hour party last Sunday.

Andres said the celebration was placed under maximum security to prevent any untoward incident.

Officials inspected all the items brought to the party, including food and the sound system, and maintained the ban on alcoholic drinks.

Allowing parties inside the prison depends on the warden's discretion, Pasay City Mayor Wenceslao "Peewee" Trinidad told the INQUIRER.

"The party could boost the morale of the inmates," the mayor said.

Sigue-Sigue Sputnik and Batang City Jail are the two main gangs in the facility.

Both groups hold yearly anniversary celebrations.

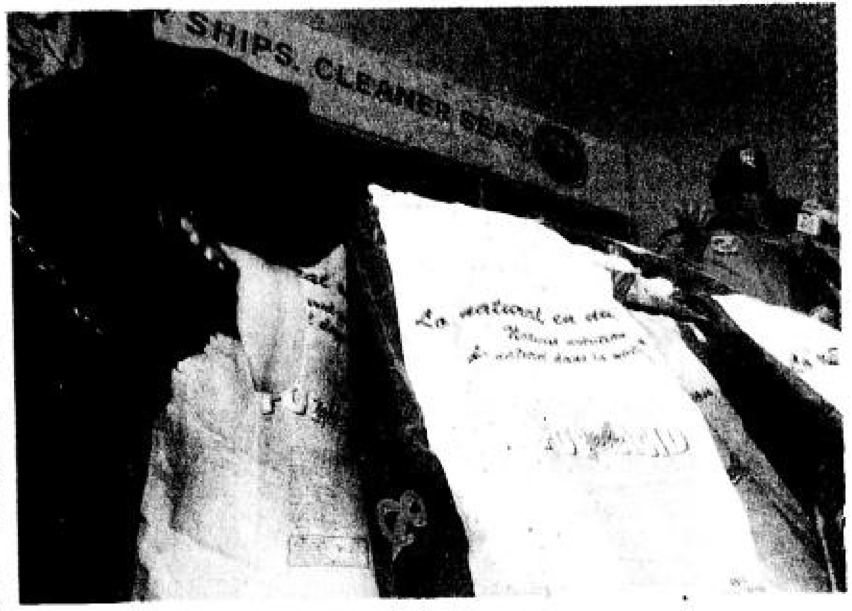
Shipment causes stir in Manila port area

TEN SACKS of white powdery substance from Spain bound for Davao kept security men at the Manila North Harbor on their toes Saturday on suspicion that they could be part of a terrorist bomb-making shipment.

The white powder inside the sacks tested positive for trinitrotoluene or TNT, a highly explosive compound, according to Coast Guard spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo.

Balilo said the sacks were discovered inside a warehouse of Aboitiz Transport at Pier 8 by sea marshals and company security officers.

A bomb-sniffing dog reportedly sat beside the sacks during a routine inspection and alerted authorities.



A BOMB-SNIFFING dog sits beside the suspicious sacks of white powder as Coast Guard Vice Admiral Arturo Gosingan presents the cargo to media. ERIK ARAZAS

Suspicious

The dog's action was an indication that it smelled something suspicious inside the sacks. Suspicious objects could include drugs or explosive materials.

The sacks had the markings "FOSphACID" and "Norel&Nature."

A check on the Internet showed that "Norel&Nature" is a Madrid-based company that manufactures and distributes feed additives for livestock.

"FOSphACID" is a feed additive composed of organic and inorganic acids.

In a report, the Coast Guard in the National Capital Region said the contents of the sacks had a "strong acidic odor."

With the discovery, Balilo said Aboitiz conducted tests on samples of the white powder using its Vapor Tracing Machine.

He said the test showed that the powder had traces of TNT.

Nonetheless, Balilo said the PCG also sent samples of the powder to the Philippine National Police Crime Laboratory headquarters for further verification.

The Coast Guard spokesperson said government intelligence agencies had been informed of the discovery in case the shipment could be linked to terrorism, especially since bombings had taken place in Davao.

Coast Guard authorities described the contents of the sacks as "fertilizer," a type of which (ammonium nitrate) can be used to make bombs.

The PCG was still trying to determine the identity of the cargo's shipper and consignee.

According to Balilo, the regular checking of cargo is part of the PCG's and the shipping companies' campaign against crime and terrorism.

The need for scrutiny was highlighted after the SuperFerry 14 bombing in February 2004, which left over 100 people dead or missing. *Leila B. Salaverria*

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INVESTMENT SCHEME

BFAD exec sued for estafa

By Tina G. Santos

EMPLOYEES of the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD) yesterday appealed to law enforcement agencies for the immediate arrest of a former bureau official who allegedly duped them of millions of pesos through an investment scheme.

In a complaint filed before the Muntinlupa Regional Trial Court, the victims said suspects Zenaida Tiburan-Baumann, former chief of the BFAD's Drugs Section, and her husband Rodolfo, enticed them to invest their money in a money-making scheme that assured them of a monthly three-percent interest.

The Baumanns are facing charges of multiple counts of estafa.

One of the complainants, Socorro de Guzman, said they had been giving the Baumanns amounts ranging from P50,000 to more than P1 million—or a total of almost P9 million—since 1999 when the suspects began their operation.

De Guzman said the Baumanns had gone into hiding since December 2004. Zenaida had also stopped reporting to the office since then, she added.

"We never had an inkling that it was a scam because they were able to fulfill their promise of high returns in the first few years," De Guzman told INQUIRER.

A warrant of arrest had already been issued by Muntinlupa Judge Patria Manalastas-de Leon against the suspects. The Baumanns have also been included in the hold departure order list of the Bureau of Immigration.

"We hope the suspects could be tried soon and punished to the full extent of the law if found guilty, " De Guzman said.

"Most of the their victims are people with low incomes who had invested their entire savings in the scheme," she added.

Ramos slay probers assure justice for family

By Tarra V. Quismundo

POLICE yesterday assured the family and friends of slain career diplomat Alicia Ramos that there would be no let-up in the hunt for her killers, as the investigation moved to its second week.

"We are doing everything so we can solve this case as fast as we can. But we are being careful in the investigation, so we're doing it step by step," said Senior Supt. Jovito Gutierrez, Makati Police Department Chief, head of the task force investigating the killing.

To date, Task Force Ramos had taken down statements from at least eight neighbors of the slain diplomat who was found dead in her bedroom inside her two-story house on 5552 Boyle Street, Barangay Palanan, Makati City. Her sister, Leticia, managed to escape and report the break-in of six men inside their house.

Investigators are looking at robbery as the motive behind the slay, even while Leticia has yet to declare any losses or valuables missing from the Palanan house.

Ex-NBI agent files libel, slander raps vs Rosebud

By DJ Yap

NOW, IT'S his turn.

This time, former National Bureau of Investigation agent Martin Soriano has filed libel and slander charges against his accuser Mary "Rosebud" Ong for punching him in the face before a television audience.

Soriano also took Ong to task for allegedly maligning him by saying he had kidnapped Ong and her mother in 1998.

Ong had also exposed him to public ridicule by claiming that he thinks he is "God's gift to women," Soriano added.

The accusations were not true, said Soriano in his complaint to the Quezon City prosecutor's office.

Ong, a former police informant, made the allegations—and delivered the punches—during a press conference at Camp Crame on Feb. 3, in which Soriano was to be presented as a suspect in a kidnapping case.

At the press conference, Ong suddenly appeared, punched Soriano twice in the face and accused him of abducting her and her mother in March 1998, with five other men.

Separate rooms

She said she and her mother were held in separate rooms and made to watch as Soriano and his cohorts repeatedly cocked their guns. Ong added that she was interrogated and hit inside a dark room.

Ong said they were only released after 14 hours of detention when Supt. John Campos, Ong's former handler, allegedly intervened and threatened Soriano.

In late February, the NBI formally charged Soriano with kidnapping, based on Ong's accusations.

Soriano also faced robbery charges after he and his men were accused of taking Ong's valuables worth P99,500 during the kidnapping incident.

Soriano has denied all the allegations. He said Ong's actions, particularly her punching him in the face, were "obviously with evident premeditation and abuse of strength," since he had not been able to defend himself because he had been handcuffed.

On purpose

He added that Ong hit him intentionally, knowing that it would be broadcast on national TV. Ong had no business at the press conference since she was not the complainant, he added. Her presence at the affair, he alleged, was "purposely to malign and mistreat" him in front of the public.

MARIKINA BANK ROB

Police say watchman led morning heist

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

HIS JOB was to look after the bank. But early yesterday morning, a security guard allegedly led three men in carting away bags of cash from a Metrobank branch in Marikina City.

The robbery appeared to have been carefully planned.

Security guard Benboy Peñaloga allegedly allowed three suspects into the bank before it opened yesterday. They then patiently waited for the bank manager, who knew the combination of the cash vault, to arrive.

Police believe the suspects fled with more than P500,000 from the bank, which was less than a kilometer from the city police headquarters.

"The cash vault had not been opened for several days because of the long weekend," police chief Felipe Rojas told the INQUIRER.

Messenger Joel Moralde, 32, was in front of the bank at the corner of Sumulong Highway and Toyota Avenue in Barangay Sto. Niño at about 6 a.m.

"I saw that the plants were already outside," he said.

He said that was unusual because it was his job to bring the ornaments out.

He knocked at the main door. It was open.

But when he got in, someone suddenly wrapped packaging tape around his eyes. He was hogtied and dragged to a room a few meters from the door.

Bank manager Alfonso Marañan and assistant manager Erlyn Banaag arrived minutes later, Rojas said.

Hogtied

They were also hogtied and blindfolded, then led to the cash vault.

The two were the ones who knew the combination to the vault, investigator PO3 Glenn Aculana said.

Incoming security guard Teodie Autida, 22, arrived at about 7:30 a.m. He told police Peñaloga opened the door for him.

But once inside, another man aimed a shotgun at his nape. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw that the man was wearing a security guard uniform.

Two men wearing bonnets hogtied him. They also wrapped a cloth around his eyes and wrapped packaging tape around his mouth.

"*Pare, pera lang ang kailangan namin. Huwag ninyo ipagpalit ang buhay ninyo sa pera,*" he quoted one of the robbers say.

Peñaloga, a guard from the Commodore Security Agency, had been with the bank since it opened two years ago, his fellow security guard Rodrigo Fortuna, 38, said.

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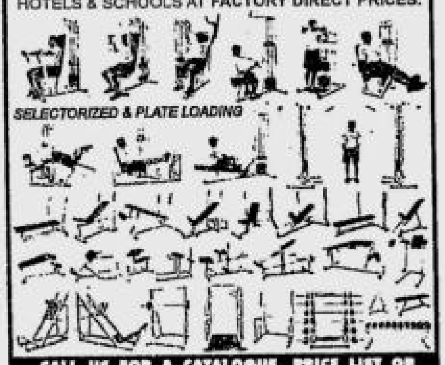

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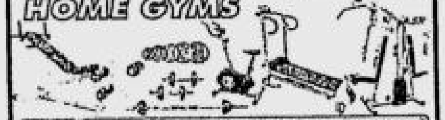

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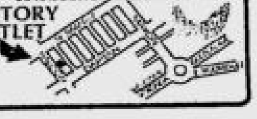

Taguig City pa needs help for newborn quadruplets

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

HE NEEDS help badly—and fast.

Renato Gregorio, 32, father of the quadruplets born at the Rizal Medical Center in Pasig City two weeks ago, is now faced with the problem of feeding his new babies.

"*Nahihirapan na ho akong bumili ng gatas para sa mga anak ko* (I hardly have enough resources to buy milk for my babies)," he said in a phone call to the INQUIRER yesterday.

Help overflowed for Mary Jane, Mary Grace, Mary Cristy and Mary Christine when news about their birth first made it to the headlines.

But Gregorio, who works as a security guard, is apparently on his own now. "*Kahit sana discount man lang sa gatas* (A discount will do)," he said.

Apart from his four babies, Gregorio has four other children.

The quadruplets continue to draw attention from neighbors, who once in a while drop by their small house in Taguig City.

Media attention gave a brief relief to Renato when his quadruplets were born. The hospital had given his babies a 50-percent discount on the bills. Taguig City Rep. Alan Cayetano paid for the remaining hospital expenses.

A company gave him a box of diapers and a dozen cans of milk. His bosses and fellow employees gave him about P9,000. An old man, who heard the news about the quadruplets, went to the hospital and gave Renato P500.

But feeding the babies is only the immediate problem. "*Paano ko kaya sila pag-aaralin? Ako lang mag-isa ang nagtratrabaho* (How can I provide for their schooling? I am the only breadwinner)," he said.

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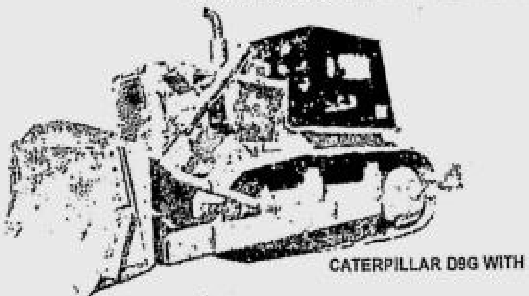
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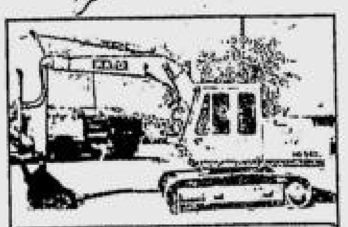
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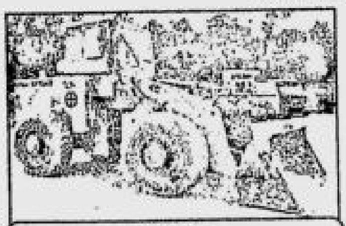
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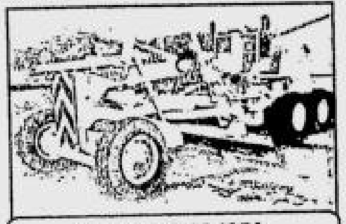
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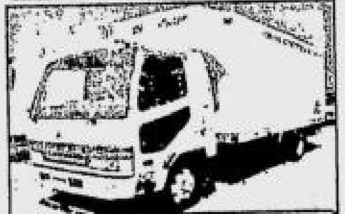
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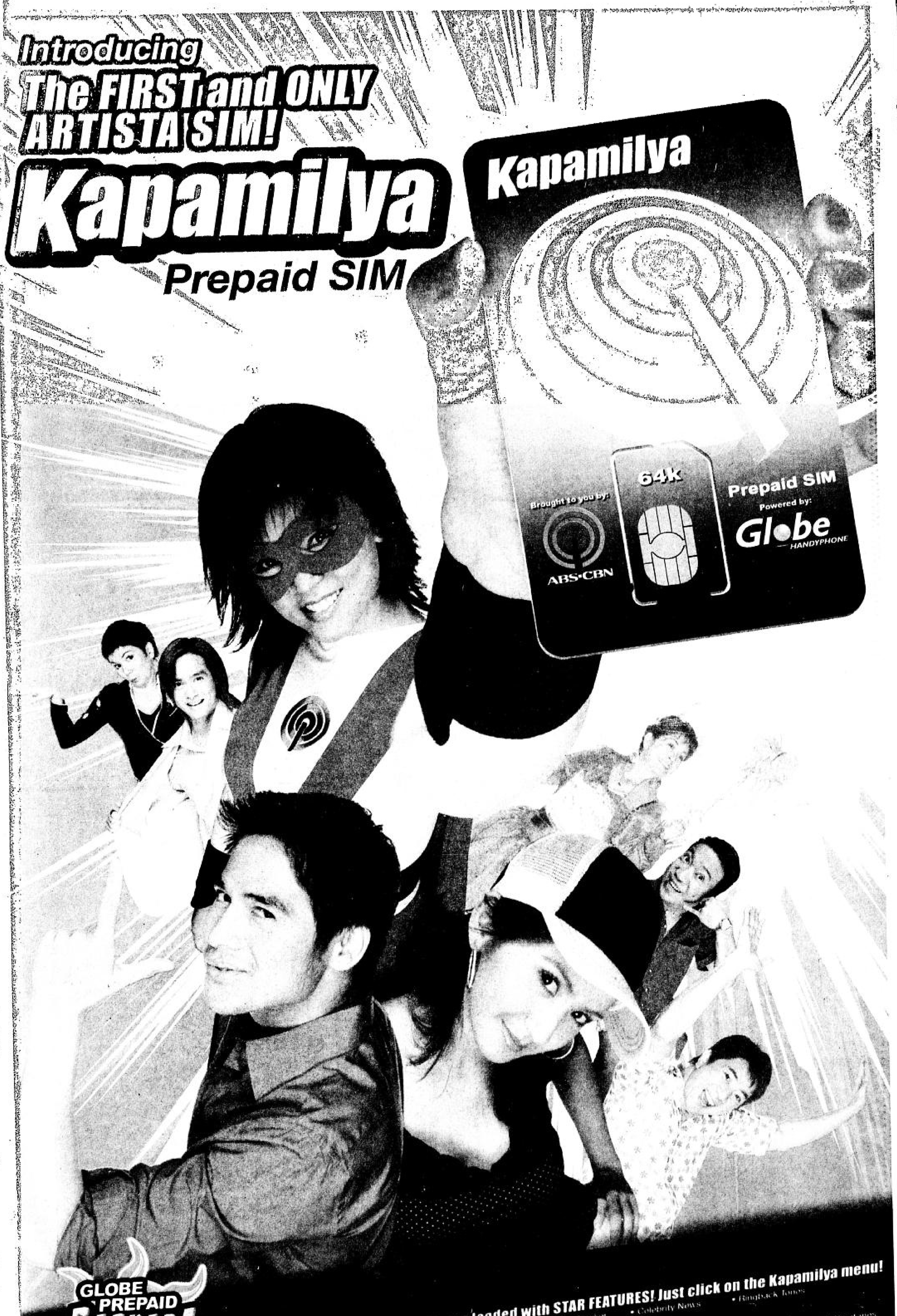
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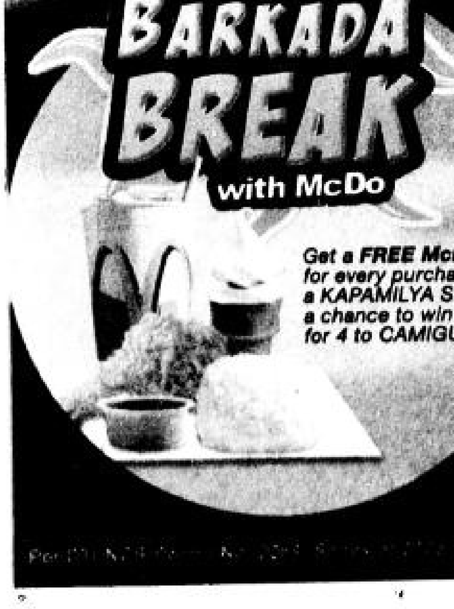
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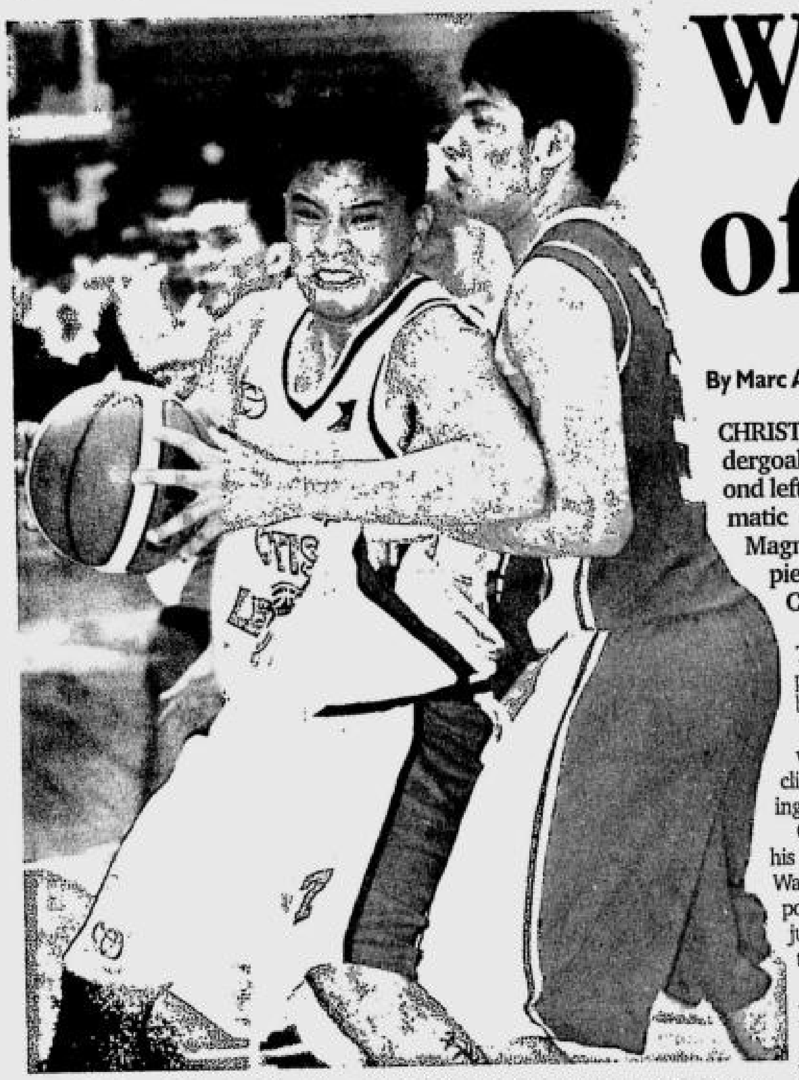
Welcoat seizes share of lead via OT thriller


DENNIS Daa of Toyota Otis-Letran tries to force a shot off Al Jamal of Nenaco-San Beda during their game yesterday. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

By Marc Anthony Reyes

CHRISTIAN Guevarra scored on an undergoal stab with nine-tenths of a second left as Welcoat Paints nailed a dramatic 85-84 overtime victory over Magnolia Ice Cream last night and a piece of the lead in the PBL Unity Cup at the Pasig Sports Center.

Subbing for the fouled-out Eugene Tan in the last 10 seconds of the extra period, Guevarra hit the game-winning basket off a miss by Jay Coching.

Guevarra's only basket for the night was all the Paint Masters needed to clinch their sixth win in seven games, tying idle leader Montana Pawnshop.

Guevarra also stole the thunder from his Fil-American teammate Anthony Washington, who came away with 22 points and 19 rebounds, including the jumper with three ticks left that forged the extra period.

The Wizards fell to 3-4 in the company of Granny Goose Kornets.

Toyota Otis-Letran needed just one scoring burst in the second quarter to defeat Negros Navigation, 67-45, in the first game.

STANDINGS	W	L
Montaña	6	1
Welcoat	6	1
Harbour	5	2
Toyota Otis	4	3
Magnolia	3	4
Granny G.	3	4
Bacchus	1	6
Nenaco	0	7

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Stringer Jonathan Piñera stood as the chief henchman for the Knights, firing 10 of his 12 points in a 20-6 assault that enabled Toyota Otis to break free from a slender 17-12 advantage and take a 37-18 cushion.

Toyota Otis improved to 4-3 in inflicting Nenaco's seventh defeat in as many games.

Getting ample time due to the absence of Ronald Capati, Piñera didn't disappoint, burning the hoops on four-of-four shooting from the field and not missing from the charity line.

But the big victory hardly elated Toyota Otis coach Louie Alas, who said his team needs to double their efforts to clinch an outright slot in the semifinals.

The scores:

First Game

TOYOTA OTIS 67—Pinera 12, Alcaraz 11, Macapagal 10, Bautista 10, Daa 6, Larong 6, Andaya 5, Oreta 4, Coronel 3, Enrile 0, Mondragon 0, Tagupa 0.

NENACO 45—Razon 12, Aljamal 10, Soriano 6, Angeles 5, Baldivia 4, Arbole 4, Javier 2, Cruz 2, Hudencial 0, Timonera 0.

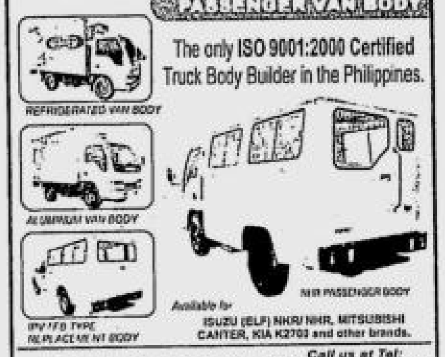
Quarters: 17-12, 37-18, 48-30, 67-45

Second Game

WELCOAT 85—Washington 22, Ortiguerra 14, Reyes 12, Tan 9, Coching 9, Orbeta 7, Dy 6, Sagad 2, Najorda 2, Guevarra 2, Sta. Maria 0.

MAGNOLIA 84—Santos 21, Miranda 17, Isip 15, Cali 13, Raneses 6, Misolas 6, Rizada 4, Yabut 2, Barcellano 0, Co 0.

Quarters: 16-16, 24-31, 49-50, 75-75, 85-84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Hotdogs, 7-1 new import tackle Tigers

HELPING Purefoods snap a five-game losing slide didn't help Antonio Smith keep his job. Neither did his work off the boards save him.

The TJ Hotdogs went ahead with plans to replace the rebounding whiz Smith and brought in 7-foot-1, 300-lb Lorenzo Coleman in hopes of injecting more offense to the team that faces the Coca-Cola Tigers today in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

Coleman, a Tennessee Tech alum in the US NCAA, arrived on the same night the TJ Hotdogs broke a long winless spell at the expense of the Shell Turbochargers, 95-82, in Balanga, Bataan Thursday last week.

"It's good to have an import who can grab those rebounds every night but we have to score in order to win," said coach Ryan Gregorio, referring to Purefoods' decision to replace Smith, who normed 22 rebounds per game.

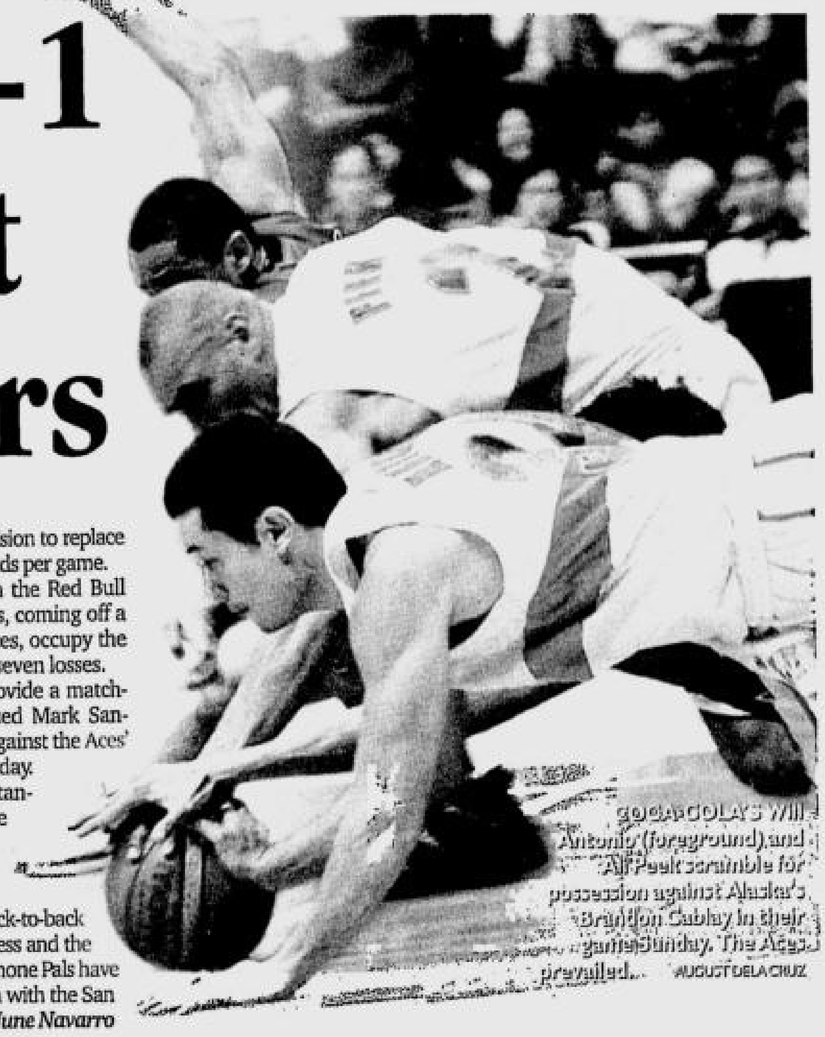
The Hotdogs are tied with the Red Bull Barako at 5-6 while the Tigers, coming off a beating against the Alaska Aces, occupy the cellar with four victories and seven losses.

Coleman is expected to provide a match-up problem for the undersized Mark Sanford, who had his hands full against the Aces' 6-foot-9 Dickey Simpkins Sunday.

Also on a slide, Red Bull tangles with Talk 'N Text in the other game with the Phone Pals seeking a share of the lead with the Aces.

The Barako dropped back-to-back games against the FedEx Express and the Sta. Lucia Realtors while the Phone Pals have won their last two to stay even with the San Miguel Beermen at 7-4.

June Navarro



COCA-COLA'S Will Antonio (foreground) and Ali Peek scramble for possession against Alaska's Brandon Cablay in their game Sunday. The Aces prevailed. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Golden Tour 50 kicks off May 26

THE "GOLDEN Tour 50 at '05" will be as prestigious and challenging as the fabled Tour Pilipinas.

Apart from the killer Baguio-to-Baguio leg, the Golden Tour would also include a stage covering the route to be used in the individual time trial (ITT) of the 23rd Southeast Asian Games in Tagaytay City in November.

Reuben Pangan, head of Golden Tour principal organizer Dynamic Outsource Solutions, Inc., promised this yesterday as he bared that the 10-stage cycling marathon from May 26-June 5 would carry all the trimmings and challenges of the fabled Tour.

"The organizers of the Golden Tour are confident that the 50th edition of the multi-stage cycling spectacle will live up to the high expectations of Tour Pilipinas enthusiasts," Pangan said. "The Tour is the Tour and in celebration of its golden anniversary, we are prompted to continue a certified tradition in Philippine [sports]."

Pangan is joined in the organizing committee by Cebu Waterfront Hotel president and T&G Tourism and Development Corp. head Patrick Gregorio for the tourism and marketing aspect of the organization and Marito Mendoza, the PhilCycling secretary general, for the technical and race management aspect.

Sans the final route survey to be conducted next week, the Golden Tour will cover the following: Stage 1 May 26-Quezon City to Lucena City (massed start or MS), Stage 2 May 27-Lucena City to Tagaytay City (MS), Stage 3 May 28-Nasugbu to Tagaytay (Sea Games ITT route), Stage 4 May 29-Marikina to Olongapo (MS), Stage 5 May 30-Olongapo to Dagupan (MS), May 31 is rest day, Stage 6 June 1-Dagupan to Cabanatuan (MS), Stage 7 June 2-Cabanatuan to Baguio (MS), Stage 8 June 3-Baguio to Baguio (MS), Stage 9 June 4-Baguio to Angeles City (MS) and Stage 10 June 5-Manila Criterium (Luneta Circuit).

DOS-1 has had extensive experience in managing major sports events in the country, having been part of the past two editions of the Tour Pilipinas association and staging year-round golf tournaments.

Big int'l field vying for top honors in Subic triathlon

A BIG foreign contingent will plunge into action in the 11th Subic International Triathlon which fires off this Sunday inside the Subic Bay Freeport in Zambales.

Some 200 triathletes from 13 countries, including host Philippines, have already confirmed their participation in the only locally-held race sanctioned by the International Triathlon Union and the Asian Triathlon Confederation.

The organizing Triathlon Association of the Philippines said world-ranked entries from Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Austria, Israel, Malaysia, India, Iran, Singapore and Thailand have confirmed for the event.

Last year, the country hosted the Asian Triathlon Championship in lieu of the Subic International Triathlon. Although Asian champion Dmitry Gaag of Kazakhstan is not among the bidders, the Subic field remains very competitive, according to Trap president Tom Carrasco.

The event is sponsored by Speedo, Powerbar, Smart Addict Mobile Pre-paid, David's Salon and Skin n Face Spa, Stronghold Insurance, Reliv, Asian Center for Insulation, GlaxoSmithKline, Legenda Hotel-Subic, the PSC, POC and hosted by the SBMA.

Runnex-Powerbar 16K draws elite runners

RUNNERS have until May 10 to register for the Runnex-Powerbar 10K-16K Anniversary Run slated May 15 on the UP Diliman campus in Quezon City.

Runnex president Fidel Ringor said they expect the country's finest runners, including members of the national training pool, to be at the starting line.

"We are heartened by the early response from runners and expect to reach our target field of a thousand participants," said Ringor, himself a full marathoner who has finished numerous international races including the New York and Melbourne Marathons.

Registration fee is P170 inclusive of a finisher's T-shirt and a Powerbar bar.

The event is co-sponsored by Pharmaton, Mizuno RMG Shoes, Globe Telecom, Polar heart rate Monitors, RFM, Pfizer, Viva Mineral Water, and Great Domestic Insurance.

The top finishers in the 22nd edition of the race will pocket cash prizes and gift packs from the event's corporate sponsors.

The top three male and female finishers in both the 10-K and the 16-K will receive P3,000, P2,000 and P1,000, respectively.

Stop Ginebra's mystery theater

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

THE GINEBRA team coach sounded all poised to call in a team of detectives.

Siot Tanquingcen swore he's been deeply mystified by the series of losses suffered by the Gin Kings, winner of the PBA's two previous conferences.

Ginebra has slid inexplicably from superb to sloppy.

But Tanquingcen need not treat the crisis like a Perry Mason mystery.

All he has got to do is review Ginebra's last game.

No, not as a coach. As an objective analyst.

Or he could try to work the problem like a physician.

The defects were too glaring to escape the eyes even of a plain observer.

No need for a stethoscope, much more an MRI.

***

Ginebra is down because the team is still gripped by the partying mood.

It goes all out to play, attack and score baskets with the passion of kids on the first day of a summer break.

But the Gin Kings all too conveniently forget to fight hard like mature men on a mission when it's their turn to defend.

In fairness to Ginebra, its top scorers, led by Mark Caquioa, would often outdo themselves to carve out winners.

They are ferocious, selfish and unforgiving in going for baskets, even if they had to blindly bang a wall.

But when the task calls for them to play like hairy beasts in defense, team ferocity melts.

***

This could indeed sound shallow and simplistic.

The prescription is as flat, stale, as that dictum about defense being good offense.

Unfortunately for Ginebra, it lately has raised playing hooky on defense to an abominable level.

They've made defense appear like the least of necessities in a game, and this should never escape the eyes even of young, happy coaches.

Unless Tanquingcen has also allowed himself to be caught in Ginebra's blind partying.

***

Take it from one who took the pains of watching closely Ginebra's latest defeat, a repeat fall against the Shell team last week.

Shell is not the top attacking team in the PBA.

But the limp, lost defensive stand displayed by Ginebra made the Shell team appear ready to contend in the current NBA playoffs.

Not to take anything from Shell. But the Turbochargers, thanks to the Kings' pauper stand, loomed regal, super sharp.

***

Ginebra has every reason to play kingly again.

It should strike back and return to the league midstream.

Actually, what Ginebra has been suffering appears more like a relapse, with the team backsliding to the soft, scattered ways of the pre-Tanquingcen days.

It's actually an old ailment that's been hobbling the most popular PBA club.

The Gin Kings have got to return to the tournament because their fortunes never fail to reflect on the fickle PBA attendance.

Ginebra still packs the magic with its legion of fans.

To keep the romance burning, the Gin Kings have to reinvent themselves and play unforgiving ball on both ends of the court.

However, coach Tanquingcen is bound to miss the train if he still refers the shallow Ginebra mystery to detectives.

RACING TIPS

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Race 2—1. D As In Dixie 2. Western Legend 3. Battle Hero 4. Forever Joyce 5. Friendly Venture

Race 3—1. You and Me 2. Pasirit 3. Diamond Sky 4. Player's Twist

Race 4—1. Real Spicy 2. Speed Advantage 3. Cat's Jewel

Race 5—1. Ocean Deep 2. Vivere 3. Mas Que Nada 4. Pay to See 5. Unrivaled

Race 6—1. Ahead of Time 2. Fantasia 3. Golden Africa 4. Magnanimous

Race 7—1. Blue Sheikh 2. Hello Happy 3. La Signorina 4. Top Most 5. Well Noted

Race 8—1. Ocean Cookie 2. Amuridik 3. Graceful Conqueror 4. King View 5. Strong Colony 6. Loving Thunder

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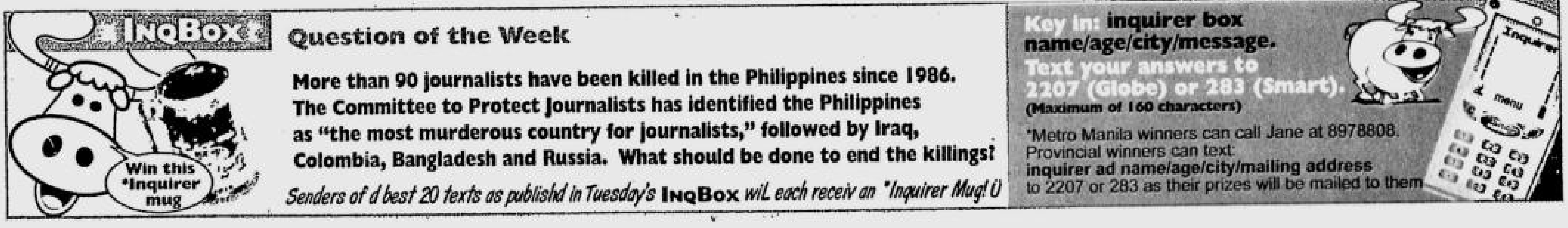

Question of the Week

More than 90 journalists have been killed in the Philippines since 1986. The Committee to Protect Journalists has identified the Philippines as "the most murderous country for journalists," followed by Iraq, Colombia, Bangladesh and Russia. What should be done to end the killings?

Senders of d best 20 texts as publishd in Tuesday's **INQBOX** *wiL each receiv an *Inquirer Mug!*

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inquirer ad name/age/city/mailing address
to 2207 or 283 as their prizes will be mailed to them

RP jr netters shut out UAE

TODAY'S TIES (*Manila Polo Club*)
Starting 10 a.m.
Thailand vs Malaysia (Group 2)
Japan vs New Zealand (Group 5)
Philippines vs India (Group 3)
Indonesia vs Chinese Taipei (Group 4)
Pakistan vs UAE (Group 3)
Singapore vs China (Group 4)
Australia vs Hong Kong (Group 1)

FOURTH seed Philippines followed up its solid 3-0 demolition of Pakistan with a similar shutout of the United Arab Emirates yesterday to boost its quarterfinal bid in the Junior Davis Cup Asia-Oceania qualifying zone at the Manila Polo Club covered court.

Ralph Kevin Barte whipped Faisal Bastaki, 6-2, 6-0, in the first singles before Kyle Joshua Dandan clobbered Hamad Ismail, 6-1, 6-2, in the second singles.

Barte and Dandan then combined to overpower Khaled Al Hassani and Ismail, 6-1, 6-1, to complete the sweep.

It was the second straight victory for the Philippines, which needs to beat India at 10 a.m. today to advance to the single round-robin quarterfinals of this event for players 16 years old and below and presented by BNP Paribas and supported by Wilson balls and Astoria Plaza Hotel.

Sixth-ranked India, sporting a 1-0 record, was playing Pakistan at press time.

Top seed Australia picked its first win at the expense of Uzbekistan, 3-0, in Group 1.

World No. 88 Patrick Nicholls breezed past Djanibek Orazaliev, 6-3, 6-2; Joel Linder downed Viktor Kim, 6-2, 6-0; and the doubles team of Stephen Donald and Nicholls conquered Sergey Dulin and Orazaliev, 6-2, 6-1.

Third seed Thailand, which is in Group 2, opened up its campaign in the 17-nation tournament with a 3-0 rout of Sri Lanka.

Perakat Siriluethaiwattana, ranked No. 209 in the ITF Juniors, struggled past Rukmul Cooray, 5-7, 6-4, 6-1, while Kittiphong Wachiramanowong defeated Ravindrakumar Kohulan, 6-1, 6-1. The Thai pair won the doubles over Chavi Talagala and Cooray, 6-1, 6-3.

Seventh seed Taiwan downed Singapore, 3-0, to take the lead in Group 4 with two consecutive wins.

Huang Hsu-chun downed Nicholas JunYang Tan, 6-0, 6-1; Peng Hsien-yin prevailed over Min Sylvester Wee, 6-2, 7-6 (3); and the pair of Huang and Peng defeated Chengjie Yan and Wee, 6-2, 6-0.

Unseeded China stunned fifth seed Indonesia, 3-0, as Sa Chen outplayed Lenz Theodor, 6-3, 6-4; Zhou Zhouqing downed Agung Bagus Dewantoro, 7-5, 6-1; and Chuan Jiang and Zhou blasted Dewantoro and Theodor, 62, 6-3, in the doubles.

FILIPINO Kyle Joshua Dandan does a between-the-legs forehand return en route to beating Hamad Ismail yesterday. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Don Enrique golfers rule Intervillage

DON Enrique Heights drew four 39 points from its mainstays to pool a 296 under the Stableford scoring system and beat Acropolis by nine points in the first round of the north sector tournament of the Nokia Intervillage golf series at the Forest Hills Golf Club in Antipolo on Monday.

Skipper Jose Santos Jr. led the Don Enrique golfers' charge with 39 points, matched by Eddie Silverio, Romeo Ignacio and Wilmer Embuscado, while Bobby Gabriel and Cris Gabriel backed them up with 37s and Narciso Ragua and Antonio Sibayan tossed in 33 points apiece to anchor the team's romp in the event sponsored by telecommunications giant Nokia.

Acropolis had a couple of 37s—courtesy of Nelson Ang and Johnny Yu—for its best scores in the day of changing fortunes at one of the toughest courses in the land. But the team got four 36s from team captain Jake Tan, Jimmy Senir, Joseph Salao and Al King, a 35 from Leocadio Nitorreda and a 34 from Jose Sto. Domingo for an aggregate of 387.

La Vista, atoning for its second-to-last finish last year, finished a strong third, just a point behind at 286; Corinthian placed fourth with a 284 while Xavierville stood within striking distance at 281.

Defending champion Philam Homes failed to live up to its pre-tournament hype as the team to beat in the event, backed by 357 Boracay, Sonlie International Corp., Pioneer Insurance and Surety Corp., BJ Marthel International Inc., Pisanti golf shirts and TCL Sun, Inc., as it struggled with a depleted lineup and limped home with a 275 for sixth place.

Still, Philam, winner of this event for golfing villages in the metropolis the last three years, is expected to strike back in the final 18 holes on May 30. It needs a strong finishing kick to get another crown in the grand finals. For details, contact 8121169/8302179 or 0917-8285449.

Estayo, Curtan brace for crown showdown

A CLOSE finish looms between the country's top track cyclists—Tagaytay's Nilo Estayo and Quezon City's Paterno Curtan—as the First Philippine Velo Challenge wound up its ninth day of racing yesterday at the Amoranto Velodrome.

Estayo and Curtan made it a two-way race for the overall individual championship in the Elite men's category of the event co-presented by the First Gentleman's Foundation of lawyer Jose Miguel Arroyo and Air21 (Sagot Ko, Padala Mo!)-Tour Pilipinas Inc.

Estayo hiked his point total to 52 after he topped the elimination race yesterday, besting Curtan's 49 points in the 10-race day Velo Challenge that is preparatory to the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

Both riders are expected to go neck-and-neck on Saturday.

In other divisions, Jan Paul Morales also of Tagaytay International Convention Center, tries to hold on to a slim three-point advantage when he and Jerwin Torres of MaynilA attempt to grab the Juniors title. Morales has a 41-38 edge over Torres going into the last day of competition.

Gerardo Amar of Elixir and Candido Querimit of Quezon City are locked in the Veterans division as both members of the national coaching staff have 42 points apiece. Querimit, a former national cyclist like Amar, won the veterans 4,800-meters massed start with a time of seven minutes and 55.36 seconds to force a stalemate with Amar.

Marites Bitbit (Elixir) is a virtual lock to win the Elite women's crown. Virgilio Valenzuela of Puerto Princesa City and entrepreneur Edilberto Lantin (Wescor) are expected to take care of their sizable leads on Saturday to ensure their victories in the Masters and Executives divisions.

New Face taekwondo tilt May 7

AROUND 1,000 taekwondo jins are expected to see action in the 2005 Petron New Face of the Year championships set May 7-8 at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium.

According to Philippine Taekwondo Association president Robert N. Aventajado, the event will give upcoming jins the opportunity to show various techniques and styles in the sport.

"Participants will get the chance to get exposed to actual competition," says Aventajado, noting that most of the entries will be competing for the first time.

All PTA chapters and branches throughout Metro Manila and the provinces, including those from the military, have agreed to enter fighters in eight categories, namely, senior men and women, junior men and women, mid-junior men and women and grade school boys and girls.

Organizing committee chair and PTA vice president Sung Chon Hong said the event is part of the association's commitment to help develop taekwondo in particular and the government's grassroots program in general.

Taekwondo has been a rich source of medals for the Philippines in international competitions like the Southeast Asian and Asian Games and the World Cup. The PTA is determined to remain as the region's top taekwondo country, like it did in Vietnam two years ago.

This weekend's tourney is supported by Milo, the Philippine Sports Commission, Petron and Accel.

Martial arts enthusiasts are invited to watch the competition, which starts at 9 a.m.

YOUNG CHAMPS: Members of the St. John's Wort Montessori School of Laguna pose with team officials after bagging the tee ball trophy of the Philippine Tot Baseball/Softball Foundation-run Kids Tournament at Ayala Alabang Country Club recently. Front row, from left: Chyb Naval, JM Fontilla, John-John Hain, Vince Aala, Ericka Magcalas, Jun Despida, Aaron Afante, Nico Tenorio, Gabriel Nadres. Back row, same order: Coach Eric Canzon, Ace Quilitis, Neil Conechado, Kendric Jiz de Ortega, Dhottie Tingzon, Bryan Alcantara, team head Liza Tingzon-Rentero, Clarisse Santos, Joshua Rubis, John Luis Candulisas, Daryl Dela, Coach Kelly Culubong.

URCC VI unleashes fury June 25

MARTIAL artists will be returning to the Casino Filipino Amphitheater in Parañaque City on June 25 for the 6th Universal Reality Combat Championship (URCC)

Dubbed "Unleashed Fury," the event is presented by San Miguel Strong Ice and will feature three title matches. Mark Sangiao (wushu) will be battling it out with Steven Ramos (Dittor MMA) for the bantamweight title. Seeing action for the flyweight division title is Richard Lasprilla (DEFTAC Jujitsu) and Erwin Tagle (Submission Sport Philippines). Highlight of the evening is the encounter between TJ Tiu (Freestyle Wrestling) and Phil Bryner (Tough Republic) for the heavyweight championship.

Organized by martial artist Alvin Aguilar, the URCC is a system of fighting which incorporates stand-up and ground techniques. Tickets will be available starting May 4 at the Ticketnet outlets at the Araneta Coliseum and at the SM Department Store. For inquiries, call 9115555.

PHIL Bryner (left) will face TJ Tiu for the heavyweight title in the URCC 6 "Unleashed Fury" at the Casino Filipino Ampitheater on June 25.

Kravmaga at Atrium tomorrow

EYAH Yanilov, the highest ranking kravmaga expert in the world, will discuss the basic principle and technique of kravmaga tomorrow from 12-2 p.m. at the Atrium, A of SM Megamall ground floor and at the Rockwell Station, Makati City, at 5 p.m.

Kravmaga is a contact combat fighting technique that started in 1940 and was popularized by the Israeli Defense Forces during the Sinai Campaign. It was founded by Imil Lichtenfeld who tutored Yanilov.

With Yanilov as head instructor, kravmaga is now being used by defense and police forces all over the world, notably the European countries, part of Asia, and the San Francisco, USA, Police Force.

Kravmaga was introduced in the Philippines last year with a demonstration before officers and members of the Philippines National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

There will also be a seminar on Saturday, May 7, between 2 to 5 p.m. at the kravmaga Philippines training center at 20-E Maclang cor. P. Guevara, San Juan. *Marlon Bernardino*

SPORTSWATCH

Red Bull basketball camp

THE RED Bull Basketball Camp 2005 will be held starting May 14 at the RFM Gym n Mandaluyong. The six-day camp being held in cooperation with ACCEL is limited to 40 applicants. Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao, a four-time champion mentor in the PBA, leads the facilitators of the camp also set May 15, 18, 26, 28 and 29, from 2-4 p.m. at the RFM gym in Mandaluyong. Joining Guiao are his Red Bull assistants Gee Abanilla, Rhoel Nadurata, Rudy Hines and American conditioning and training coach Edward Addison. For details, contact 6310724 or 6321543 and look for Joenare or Cecil.

Mandaluyong boxers nip Leyte

MANDALUYONG CITY nipped Tanauan, Leyte, 4-3, last Saturday to rule their dual meet in the Touch Mobile Go For Gold program of the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines in Mendez, Cavite. The Mandaluyong pugs, after losing the initial pinweight bout, racked four straight wins through light flyweight Robert Daguplo, flyweight Michael Galimba, bantamweight Sandy Guarino and featherweight Lito Hapita to secure the victory with two more matches to go. The Leyteños took the final two bouts through lightweight Anel Lagunsad and light welterweight Elias Diaz.

GOLF CHAMPS: Carlo Carpio (second from left) and Alfonso King Reyno raise the overall champion's trophy after topping the 6th Don Celso Tuason and Valley Founders memorial tournament recently at the Valley Golf and Country Club. With them are Valley president Joe Feliciano, Bolo Tuason and Bobon Topacio

Game Ka Na Ba derby resumes

THE BATTLE of provincial derby champions resumes today at Roligon Mega Cockpit as the third round of eliminations of "Game Ka Na Ba 5—Cock Derby" sizzles at 5 p.m. featuring 75 fights. So far, 276 participants have registered in this event being hosted by Roligon owner Rolly Ligon. Those who scored two points last Monday were D.R. Macadagdag, Rey Briones, Tiling Capitan, Perso Patricio, Romero Yu, Muling Dorado, ASF Farms, Erwin Diamante, Felix Realiza, Palang Group, Greg David, Boy Sauco, Russel Herrera, Rep. Ompong Plaza, Jover Dilao and Terry Santos.

INQBOX Question of the Week

Some pre-need companies like CAP and Pacific Plans are having problems with the educational plans they sold. Your message to them?

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Text your answers to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart).
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*Metro Manila winners can call Jana at 8978808.
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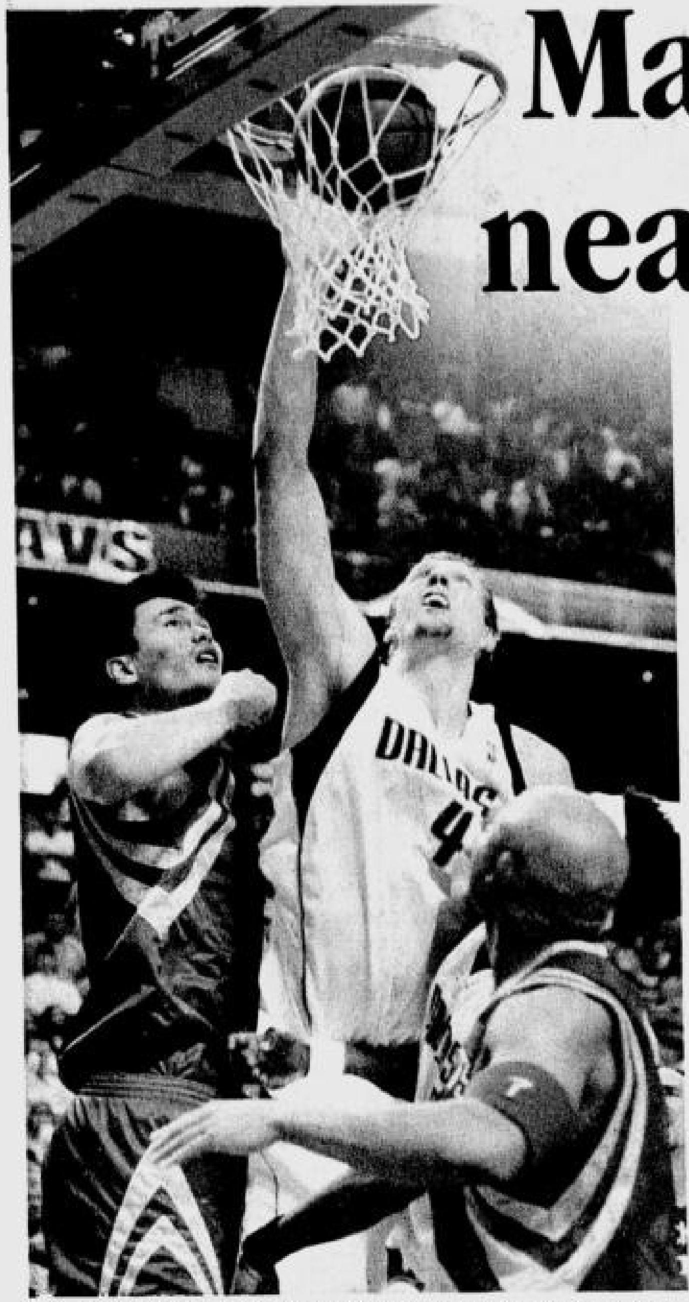
Mavs, Spurs edge rivals, near playoffs' 2nd round



WITH 20 ticks left, Dallas' Dirk Nowitzki dunks against Houston's Yao Ming (left) and David Wesley (right) to highlight the Mavs' win. AP

DALLAS, Texas—Dallas and San Antonio reached the brink of advancing to the second round of the National Basketball Association playoffs with tension-packed triumphs Monday.

Dirk Nowitzki contributed 23 points and 13 rebounds to spark the Dallas Mavericks past Houston, 103-100, to grab a 3-2 edge in their best-of-seven series.

Chinese center Yao Ming scored a game-high 30 points in a losing cause.

"Whew, what a game," Mavericks coach Avery Johnson said. "At this point, it doesn't matter how you win: good, bad, ugly, fast, slow, whatever. We made some plays down the stretch that you just can't coach."

Tim Duncan produced 39 points and 14 rebounds while French guard Tony Parker scored 11 of his 29 points in overtime to lead San Antonio past host Denver 126-115, giving the Spurs a 3-1 lead in their series.

"I was aggressive," Duncan said. "I got a little confidence early and it just went from there."

Bulls tie series

In the night's only other game, Washington's Juan Dixon came off the bench to score a career-high 35 points after a 1-for-10 shooting performance in game three to spark the Wizards past Chicago 106-99, evening their series at 2-2.

"I got my act together and came through," Dixon said. "Now my job is to keep it going."

The Mavericks could advance to a second-round matchup for the fourth time in five years, with regular-season champion Phoenix waiting if Dallas should win game six Thursday at Houston.

Dallas led the entire second half but never comfortably, nearly squandering an 11-point lead in the final 4 1/2 minutes but holding on with the aid of five missed Yao free throws and a controversial call.

"It's hard to swallow," Houston star Tracy McGrady said. "This is great basketball. Every game is going down to the wire. Hate to lose but love this series."

Two Jerry Stackhouse free throws boosted the Mavericks' edge to 99-94 and Yao sandwiched a dunk and two free throws around a Nowitzki basket to bring the Rockets within 101-98 with 17 seconds to play.

Controversial call

The Mavericks inbounded to Michael Finley, who was trapped in the corner by two defenders. Neither touched Finley but the Rockets were whistled for a foul and Finley made a free throw.

McGrady made a layup with 7.4 seconds to play, making it 102-100. Jason Terry missed 1-of-2 free throws with 4.8 seconds remaining, giving the Rockets a chance to force overtime.

McGrady was fouled in the backcourt by Stackhouse and missed the first free throw, then deliberately missed the second, grabbed the rebound, dribbled beyond the 3-point arc and fired a jumper that clanged off the rim at the buzzer.

"I have no complaints with our effort," said Houston coach Jeff Van Gundy, fined $100,000 Monday for saying referees called more penalties on Yao (*see related story*). "Our effort was good. We didn't play well enough to come away with a road win. We're going to need to play better and that's what we are planning to do."

The Spurs could advance to the second round with a home victory Wednesday.

Duncan was dominant inside but fouled out with 2:55 remaining in overtime after Carmelo Anthony slipped and fell after Duncan had touched him. But the Spurs, ignited by Parker, ended the game with a 13-8 run for the victory.

Awesome

"Tony was awesome," Duncan said. "These guys were great in overtime. They kept attacking and played great."

Earl Boykins came off the bench to lead Denver with 32 points while Anthony added 28 for the Nuggets. Argentina's Manu Ginobili added 24 points for the Spurs.

The Spurs missed nine shots in a row and went five minutes and 57 seconds without a basket in the fourth quarter, allowing the Nuggets to seize a 97-94 lead.

But French guard Parker's 3-point play on a driving layup and free throw pulled the Spurs level and ended the drought.

Parker also gave the Spurs a 107-105 edge with a jumper from the left corner with 27 seconds remaining, but Anthony was fouled driving to the hoop by Duncan and hit two free throws that set the stage for overtime.

Dixon, whose best prior total in three NBA seasons was 30 points last season against Portland, scored every Washington point in a 9-2 Wizards run to open the fourth quarter.

Internet message

"A friend said to read this message on the Wizards' message board talking dirty on me," Dixon said. "I'm already a self-motivated person, but that took it to another level. I definitely wanted to throw that back in their face."

The Bulls made a late run but Dixon and Gilbert Arenas, who scored 23 points, each made six free throws in the final seconds to seal the victory.

AFP

FOR BASHING REFS, CUBAN

Van Gundy draws record fine

DALLAS—The National Basketball Association fined Houston Rockets coach Jeff Van Gundy $100,000—the largest amount ever for a coach—on Monday, a day after he accused officials of being overly harsh on Chinese center Yao Ming during this year's playoffs and saying Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban is to blame.

While Van Gundy laughed off the penalty and Yao offered to pay half of the fine, NBA commissioner David Stern called the fine "an intermediary step."

He said further punishment is possible, even implying that Van Gundy could face a lifetime ban.

"If he's going to say things like that, he's not going to continue in this league," Stern said.

Stern said the league is furious both at what Van Gundy said and that he refuses to divulge the official he claims told him that referees "were looking at Yao harder because of Mark's complaints" to the league office.

Van Gundy got into trouble by telling three reporters at the team hotel in Dallas on Sunday night that a referee not working the playoffs called him after the Rockets went up 2-0 and warned that Yao was mentioned in an online evaluation from supervisor of officials Ronnie Nunn.

Van Gundy added that because Cuban "has been hard on" the league and officials, "he's gotten the benefit."

He stood by his complaints Monday and said he's made many of them privately to the league all season.

"I would watch all of (Yao's) 20 fouls with anyone," Van Gundy said. "And I would have no problems making my case that he's not refereed appropriately."

Yao offered to split the fee because "coach was talking about me. I feel I need to do it that way."

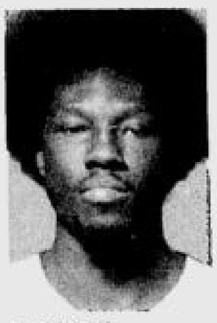
Cuban found little irony in someone getting fined for comments involving him and his favorite object of derision, the way officials do their job.

"It's nice to see someone else buying the coffee and danish for the NBA," he said.

Asked if Van Gundy would be forced to name his officiating source, Stern said, "he's going to have to satisfy us on a number of fronts. I don't want to limit my options."

AP, AFP

Wallace named defensive player of the year anew



WALLACE

NEW YORK—Ben Wallace of the Detroit Pistons was named the NBA's Defensive Player of the Year for the third time in four seasons.

Wallace, the only player to finish the season among the league's top five in both blocks and steals, became just the second player after Dikembe Mutombo to win the award three times when balloting was revealed Monday.

Mutombo won in 1995, 1997, 1998 and 2001.

After averaging 12.2 rebounds, 1.43 steals and 2.38 blocks, Wallace received 339 points, 92 more than swingman Bruce Bowen of the San Antonio Spurs.

He claimed 45 of 125 first-place votes from a panel of sportswriters and broadcasters throughout the United States and Canada.

"I don't really set out to win the award," Wallace said. "I set out to be the best player I can be."

The 30-year-old Wallace also won in 2002 and 2003. Forward Ron Artest of the Indiana Pacers ended his run last year.

AFP

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Shangri-La Plaza

Sharapova could end up No. 1

BERLIN—Just days after People magazine named her as one of the world's 50 most beautiful people, Maria Sharapova was on court chasing a more exclusive list.

The 18-year-old Russian could become the world's top-ranked tennis player this week, passing Lindsay Davenport, if she wins the $1.3 million Qatar Total German Open.

"It obviously would be an honor, I don't think about it. If it works out, it works out. If not, I have a lot of years ahead of me," said Sharapova Monday at a press conference jammed with photographers and TV camera people who couldn't get enough pictures of the photogenic blonde.

The event, a major tuneup for the French Open, boasts five top-10 players led by the defending champion—second-seeded Amelie Mauresmo—as well as former world-leading Belgians Kim Clijsters and Justine Henin-Hardenne.

The biggest threat for Wimbledon champion Sharapova could be Henin-Hardenne. She was sidelined most of last year with a virus and knee injuries, but has come back strong, winning at Charleston and Warsaw in the past two weeks.

Those victories reaffirmed the speedy Belgian's prowess on clay. She won the German Open in 2003, then went on to take the French Open for her breakthrough Grand Slam title.

Henin-Hardenne said the long layoff turned into a blessing.

AP

Tarver, Johnson rematch in June

MEMPHIS, Tennessee—Antonio Tarver finally has his rematch with Jamaica's Glen Johnson for the IBO light heavyweight title, and he promised on Monday he will be ready to make up for his controversial loss in December.

Tarver said he didn't get into shape for their first fight until after the contract was signed in mid-October. Still, he pointed out that several observers scored the fight as a victory for him.

"The guy didn't beat me," Tarver said at a news conference.

Johnson, 42-9-2 with 28 knockouts, said he doesn't have to make excuses for why he won.

"I took it seriously. I did my work. I did my part, and I came out on top. I will do the same thing again June 18. We will take care of business, and I will come out on top."

AP

TIM Henman returns to Brazilian Gustavo Kuerten. AFP

Roddick, Agassi advance

ROME—Andy Roddick and Andre Agassi advanced to the second round of the Rome Masters on Monday after comfortable opening day victories.

Top seed Roddick, a losing finalist at Wimbledon last year, defeated Britain's Greg Rusedski, 6-4, 6-2, while sixth seed Agassi, a winner here in 2002, overcame a sluggish start. to beat Italian qualifier Alessio Di Mauro, 7-5, 6-2.

Roddick will play Albert Costa. Agassi, with eight Grand Slam titles to his name, will meet Richard Gasquet, the French 18-year-old who barely broke a sweat in a 6-0, 6-2 thrashing of Thailand's Paradorn Srichaphan.

British fourth seed Tim Henman, a runner-up at the French Open last year, also won his first round match, cruising to a 6-3, 6-3, victory over Brazil's Gustavo Kuerten, a three-time Roland Garros champion.

Roddick admitted it was a great relief to beat Rusedski: "First round matches can be a little uncomfortable and Greg was serving well in the first set."

AFP

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Bathroom politics, fun of kids and other boob-tube booboos

HOST: What makes your restaurant different from other fine eating places?

Guest: Our big difference is, *puro kami mga* seafoods *dito*!

(*Kaya pala mukha kang* sea urchin!)

* * *

Host: What made you choose to marry Carlo, among all the eligible young bachelors who courted you?

Guest: I especially liked him because I saw he was fun of kids!

(Fun of kids?—What fun!)

* * *

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Host: What in your opinion is the biggest challenge facing the Roman Catholic Church's new Pope?

Guest: Among all the other challenges, I think the biggest one is the need to solidify the church.

(*Ay*, solidify the church!)

* * *

Host: How successful do you think he will be in achieving this goal?

Guest: Sad to say, given the difficult situation of conflicting agenda, it's almost an impossible.

(Almost an impossible *daw, o*!)

* * *

Host: What kinds of fashion styles do you favor in your designs?

Guest: Oh, all shorts of fashion styles!

(As long as they're—shorts?)

* * *

Host: Why did you decide to be a businesswoman?

Guest: Because I didn't want to be like other wives who are just a home sitter.

(Is that the cousin of a baby sitter, or a fence sitter?)

* * *

Host: What's the weather like tomorrow? Let's ask our weather girl!

Weather girl: For our weather tomorrow, don't forget your umbrella when you go out, because showers will persit.

(Ay, showers will persit!)

* * *

Host: What will you charge your opponent with in court?

Guest: For all the wrong he did, definitely we will demand him for bridge of contract!

(But not for contract bridge, we presume?)

* * *

Host: What is the challenge of our survival.. test?

Co-host: Supposedly, they will have to look and cook their own foods.

(That's so... challenging!)

* * *

Host: What is your evaluation of the recent election of the new Pope at the Vatican?

Guest: After studying it closely, I realize that, because humans are involved, even the election of the pope involves bathroom politics!

(To flush or not to flush—that is the question!)

Jazz Wednesdays

RICHARD Merk, son of jazz great Annie Brazil, performs Wednesdays at Merk's Bar Bistro, Greenhills 3, with Eddie Katindig on vibes—with Lyn Shermann on May 4 and 11, and Sandra Lim on May 18 and 25. Band members are Romy Posadas, Ramon Guevarra, Dingdong Boogie and Ricky Posadas. Call 757-4720.

Animax Robo-Dream 2005

VARIOUS Gundam-related activities are the highlights of Animax Robo-Dream 2005 from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., May 6 at the Glorietta Activity Center. Mobile Suit Gundam animator Koichi Inove will be special guest.

There will be a Gundam figurine competition, a Cosplay parade where anime fans get to dress up as their favorite anime characters, and Gundam model kit assembly workshops.

'Hitchhiker' tops in US

LOS ANGELES—"The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" thumbed its way to the top of the box office, debuting at $21.7 million to beat out the explosive "XXX" brand.

Ice Cube's action tale "XXX: State of the Union" (billed in the Philippines as "The Next Level") opened a weak third with $13.7 million, according to studio estimates Sunday.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at North American theaters, according to Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc.

1) "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy," $21.7 million
2) "The Interpreter," $14.2 million
3) "XXX: State of the Union," $13.7 million
4) "The Amityville Horror," $8.1 million
5) "Sahara," $6 million
6) "A Lot Like Love," $5.2 million
7) "Kung Fu Hustle," $3.8 million
8) "Fever Pitch," $3.75 million
9) "Robots," $2.65 million
10) "Guess Who," $2.2 million

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② XXX 2
MTRCB: PG-13
12:20, 2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00 LMF
③ (CLOSED)
④ (CLOSED)
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MTRCB PG-13 11:30, 2:05, 4:40, 7:15, 9:50 LMF
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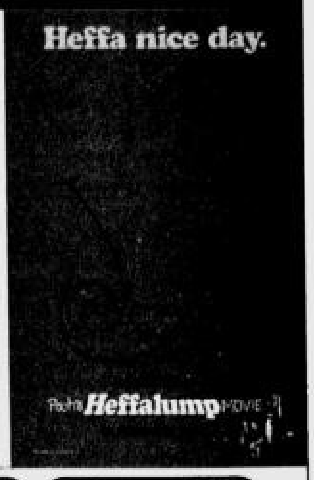
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OPENING TODAY

From page A32

Kingdom of Heaven

Directed by Ridley Scott
Stars Orlando Bloom, Eva Green, Liam Neeson, Brendan Gleeson, Jeremy Irons

Summary: An epic adventure about a common man who finds himself thrust into a decades-long war. A stranger in a strange land, he serves a doomed king, falls in love with an exotic and forbidden queen, and rises to knighthood. Ultimately, he must protect the people of Jerusalem from overwhelming forces while striving to keep a fragile peace.

Although the movie opens today in these parts, worldwide release is on May 6. Kit-sung from Germany wrote this review for imdb.com: "This film lacks, as so many Ridley Scott movies do, a coherent narrative, but what is worse (and is certainly not helped by Orlando Bloom's lack of charisma) is the lack of a convincing and interesting central character. Bloom changes from poor blacksmith to super-intelligent strategist in no time and for no good reason. The lack of a clear antagonist adds to the emotional detachment, which makes the picture, even though nicely shot, ultimately a boring experience."

Six

Stars Ray Macdonald, Intira Charoenpura, Pipat Arphirakchonnakarn

Summary: Fai is mysteriously connected to the number "6." The night before her 24th birthday (2+4 = 6), she and her friends celebrate in a haunted mansion said to be littered with six coffins. They come face to face with horror and supernatural events. What did they expect—a dinner concert at the Manila Hotel's Fiesta Pavilion?

Shattered Glass

Directed by Billy Ray
Stars Hayden Christensen, Hank Azaria, Melanie Lynskey, Peter Sarsgaard

Summary: The story of Stephen Glass, a brilliant young journalist at the New Republic who turns out to be a profligate fabricator.

A.O. Scott, in his Oct. 31, 2003 review for the New York Times, wrote: "As everyone discussing 'Shattered Glass' is bound to observe, there are obvious parallels between Mr. Glass' behavior and that of Jayson Blair, the reporter who was found last spring to have invented or plagiarized portions of at least three dozen articles in The New York Times. 'Shattered Glass'… I am happy to report, [is] much more than a knowing, insider docu-drama about a magazine that has long prided itself on its inside-the-Beltway knowingness. The movie is a serious, well-observed examination of the practice of journalism, and if it takes note of the vanity and obsessiveness that are among the vices of the profession, it also acknowledges (and perhaps romanticizes) the hard work and idealism that are among its virtues... Mr. Ray knows better than to sensationalize a story about the dangers of sensationalism. 'Shattered Glass' is good enough to be true."

'Kapuso' event …

From page A32

anne Mae. "We want to see Angel Locsin and Richard Gutierrez."

Cindy Arong, 15, and Jenda Pogoy, 18, of Masulog, also from Lapu Lapu City, came to see "StarStruck" ultimate survivors Jennylyn Mercado and Mark Herras. Roman Masungol, 34, of Bulakaw Pardo, endured the heat to catch a glimpse of the Pinoy Pop Superstars, "especially Michael Garcia."

Booths for different shows were set up around the stadium. Spectators had their photos taken at the "Encantadia" booth with costumed actors and the cute character Imaw, said concurrent program manager and AVP for drama Lilibeth Rasonable.

"SOP" host and "Mixed Nuts" mainstay Janno Gibbs recalled: "I was prepared for the worst. I was thinking, no one would show up *kasi tinapatan kami ng Dos.* But I was overwhelmed. Obviously, we love our station—in full force *kami dito.*"

"I know *sobrang lakas dito ng* Channel 2 because I used to work for that station," said Jolina Magdangal. "I'm happy that Cebuanos still support 'SOP' and the other GMA 7 shows."

Kiddie gimmicks

The events and booths in SM City Cebu on Saturday were also part of the "Kapuso Cebuano Weekend."

GMA 7 VP for news and public affairs Marissa Flores said it took them two months to prepare. "Just putting together gimmicks. We had to think up relevant activities that would be appreciated by the *masa,*" she explained.

"At Your Service," hosted by Rhea Santos, put up a dental assistance booth, while Arnold Clavio's "Emergency" provided medical assistance. The booth for "Debate," hosted by Winnie Monsod and Oscar Orbos, handed out free coffee to people who participated in an opinion poll; "Art Angel" conducted art workshops for kids.

Love Añover's "Lovely Day" featured "kiddie gimmicks"; "Extra Challenge" presented "mini-challenges"; and "Kapuso Mo, Jessica Soho" gave fans the chance to have their pictures taken with her.

"In terms of attendance, this exceeded our expectations," Flores told INQUIRER Entertainment on Saturday. "We hope this will translate into more viewers—ultimately that's the measure."

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THE WEDDING DATE

ALI MALL CINEMAS
1 CAN THIS BE LOVE
2 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
3 XXX: STATE OF THE UNION
4 BOSO
5 TAGOS SA LAMAN

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2 (DTS) CAN THIS BE LOVE
3 (DOLBY) XXX - 2 THE NEXT LEVEL
4 WEDDING DATE

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4 WEDDING DATE

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2 RESERVED
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4 RESERVED
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2 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
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4 RESERVED

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2 RESERVED
3 XXX-2 THE NEXT LEVEL
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5 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

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2 CAN THIS BE LOVE
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4 SAHARA

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2 WEDDING DATE
3 (DTS) KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
4 PARAISO
5 CAN THIS BE LOVE

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2 TAGOS SA LAMAN
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED
5 (DOLBY) KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
6 CAN THIS BE LOVE

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1 CAN THIS BE LOVE
2 XXX-2 THE NEXT LEVEL
3 (DOLBY) KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
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1 SAHARA
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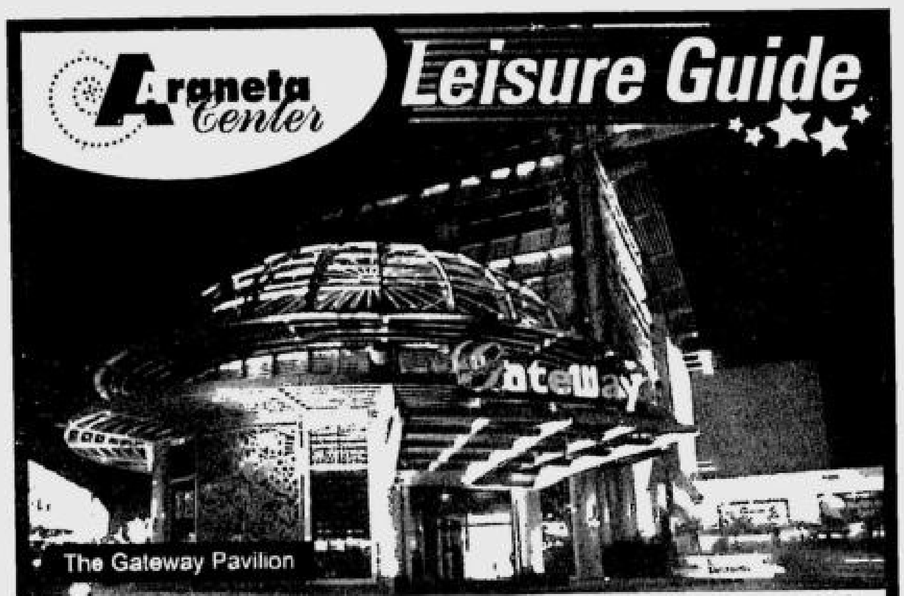

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XXX: STATE OF THE UNION
Ice Cube, Samuel L. Jackson
CAN THIS BE LOVE
Sandara Park, Hero Angeles
THE INTERPRETER
Nicole Kidman
KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
Orlando Bloom, Liam Neeson
SIX
(Thailand Horror Film)
THE WEDDING DATE
Debra Messing, D Mulroney

ALI MALL CINEMAS
❶ CAN THIS BE LOVE
Sandara Park, Hero Angeles
❷ KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
Orlando Bloom, Liam Neeson
❸ XXX: STATE OF THE UNION
Ice Cube, Samuel L. Jackson
❹ BOSO
Katya Santos, Jefrey Quizon
❺ TAGOS SA LAMAN
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May 21, Saturday, 8pm
KEVYN LETTAU: MEMORIES OF LOVE
May 14, Saturday, 8pm
ASHANTI LIVE IN MANILA
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6 THE WEDDING DATE
7 SAMARA RING 2
8 THE JACKET
9 GUESS WHO?
10 RING OF THE NIBELUNGS

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2 GUESS WHO?
3 XXX 2
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6 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
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1 LOVE ME IF YOU DARE
2 SAHARA
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4 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
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6 XXX 2
7 SIX
8 GUESS WHO?

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1 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
2 XXX 2
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4 GUESS WHO?
5 THE INTERPRETER
6 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
7 RESERVE
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1 XXX 2
2 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
3 SIX
4 GUESS WHO?

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2 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
3 SAHARA
4 THE WEDDING DATE

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2 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
3 THE INTERPRETER
4 GUESS WHO?

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2 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
3 SAHARA
4 THE INTERPRETER
5 GUESS WHO?

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2 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
3 SAHARA
4 PARAISO

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2 THE INTERPRETER
3 XXX 2
4 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
5 CURSED
6 SAHARA

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6 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

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3 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
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6 PARAISO

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1 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
2 XXX 2
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5 PARAISO
6 SPANGLISH

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Sony Music

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At the Activity Center

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	4 THE WEDDING DATE	5 GUESS WHO	6 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN	7 CAN THIS BE LOVE
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 XXX 2	2 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX SHATTERED GLASS GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX KINGDOM OF HEAVEN GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 THE INTERPRETER GUARANTEED SEATS	4 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN GUARANTEED SEATS	5 XXX 2 GUARANTEED SEATS	
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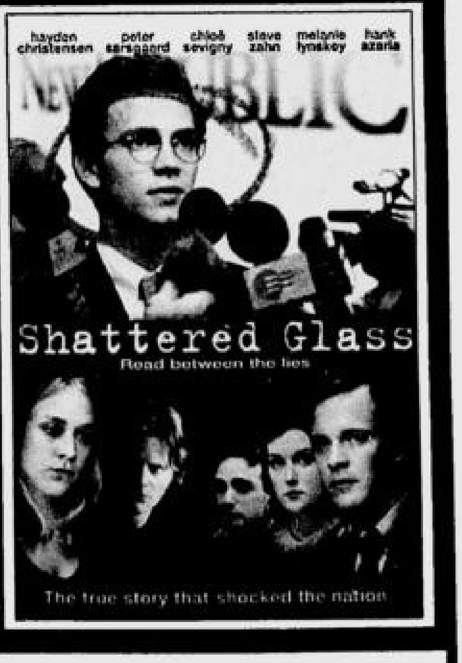

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Directed by: Freddie Santos

May 13, 4 pm and 6 pm, Activity Center

Reserved seats on a first-come, first-serve basis for shoppers who present P300 worth of receipts on May 13.

Cameron, Justin to wed Saturday?

PHOTO COURTESY OF GAWKER

REALITY TV show host Ozzy Osbourne accidentally let slip on Sunday that Cameron Diaz and Justin Timberlake are set to wed this Saturday in France.

Ozzy and Sharon Osbourne are going to be guests at the wedding, which is reportedly taking place in Nice, says England's News Of The World.

According to the report, Justin and Cameron had been planning the wedding for months.

When asked why they wouldn't be watching daughter Kelly's gig in London this Saturday, Sharon and Ozzy's camp replied that they were going to be in Nice for JT's wedding.

Timberlake and Diaz will reportedly tie the knot at the Grand-Hotel Du Cap-Ferrat. A source at the hotel admitted: "The whole hotel is fully booked for a special event next weekend."

Justin and Cameron are said to have stayed in the hotel during last year's Cannes Festival.

(Source: pagesixsixsix.blogspot.com)

GMA 7 talents and staff open festive weekend.

VIC S. EYATID

'Kapuso' event breaks Sinulog record

By Marinel R. Cruz

CEBU CITY—An estimated 50,000 Cebuanos joined GMA 7's "Kapuso Cebuano Weekend" last Sunday at Abellana Sports Complex, reportedly breaking the venue's record of attendees set by this year's Sinulog Festival held in January.

Celebrities from GMA 7 shows like "SOP," "SOP Gigsters" and "S-Files" flew in from Manila to join locals at the 2.8-hectare football field on Osmeña Boulevard.

"We were very apprehensive because we had never done this before and it's a known fact that, in Cebu, *hindi pa* full blast *ang* GMA 7," Ogie Alcasid, "SOP" co-host, told INQUIRER Entertainment last Sunday. "It was emotional. *Ang daming tao*, and they didn't leave till the end of the program."

"We chose the venue to accommodate the biggest number of people," GMA 7 vice president for entertainment Wilma Galvante said.

The complex could be accessed via four exits, one of which was exclusively for "children, elders and holders of entrance passes."

A water station was set up near an entrance; volunteers handed out free bottled water.

The network hired over 50 vans to transport talents, staff and guests from the hotels to the venue, according to JMB Car Service's Neil Barro, whose company provided 37 vans.

Prepared for worst

Fifty student volunteers from Cebu City Karatedo Club manned the entrances. "This is part of our services for the sports center," said instructor Joseph Wine de la Rosa, "so the facilities would not get damaged."

The Emergency Rescue Unit Foundation worked round-the-clock, said volunteer Kathrina Rosal. "There were only minor incidents today (Sunday)," said Rosal. "We tended patients who complained of dizziness, vomiting and stomachache."

Thirty "communicators" from the Canine Amateur Radio Club provided radio equipment to police and traffic enforcers, according to Rey Bocalla, a communicator, who reported 12 cases of cell phone snatching within the complex.

The Cebu City Fire Department deployed six personnel and assisted two women who fainted, said FO1 Roylin Maratas.

"We've been here since 9 in the morning," said Margie Baguio, 34, who came from Opon in Lapu Lapu City with her daughters Marbe Jane and Di-

KAPUSO/ A30

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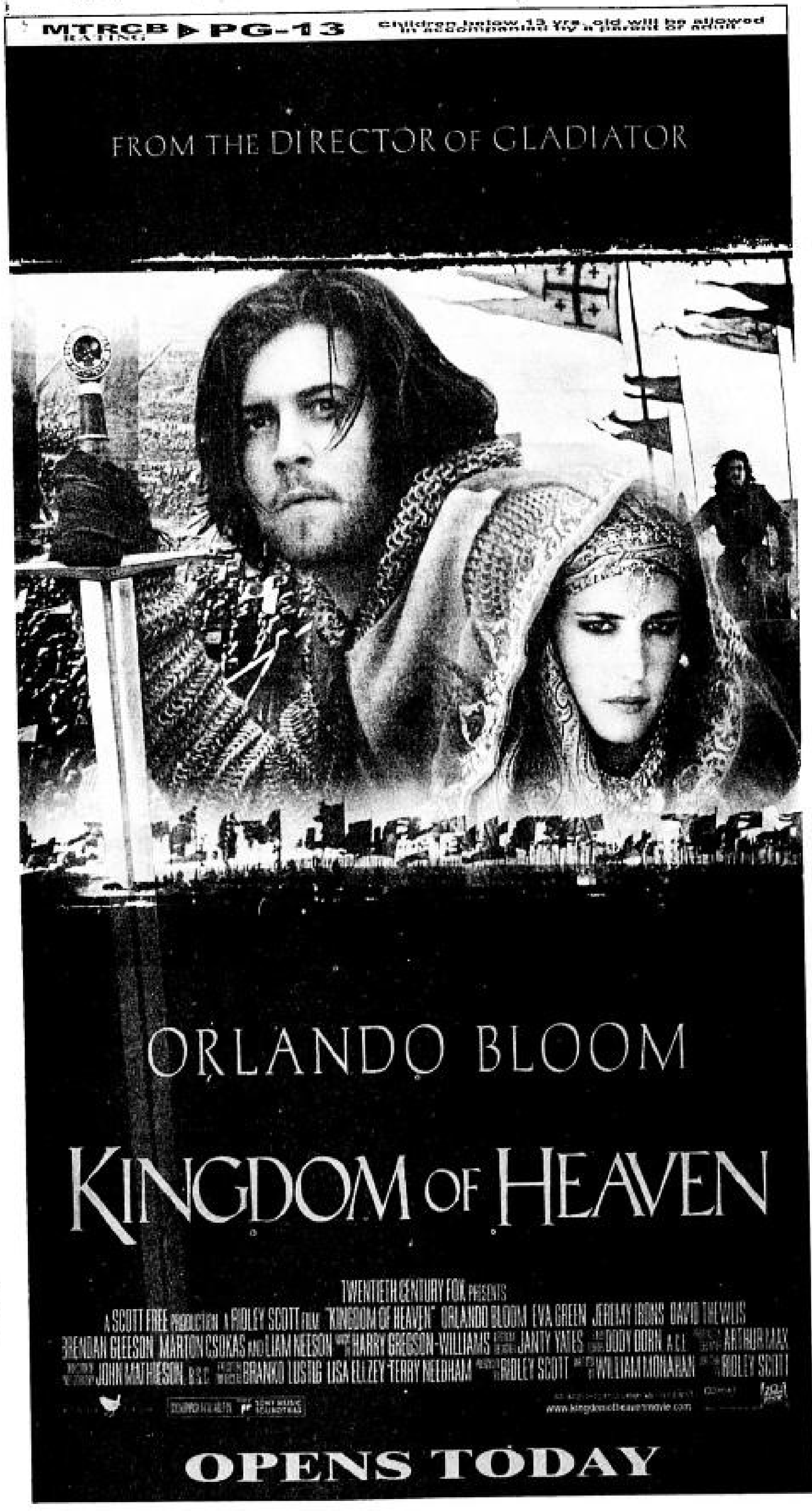
The film will be released worldwide by Unitel Pictures Inc.—the same company that distributed "American Adobo," "Imelda," "Crying Ladies" and "Santa-Santita." The film will be shown May 5-10 exclusively at Glorietta 1.

OPENING/ A30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CANTHIS BE LOVE GP 12:40,3:00,5:20,7:40,10:00	WEDDING DATE PG13 1:00,3:00,5:00,7:00,9:00	XXX 2:THE NEXT LEVEL PG13 12:50,3:15,5:40,8:05,10:30

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5th hand
6th hand
7th hand
8th hand
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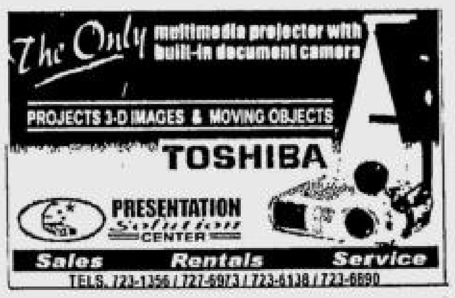

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Treasury bill rates continue to slide

By Michelle V. Remo

TREASURY bill rates continued to drop across all maturities yesterday because of bloated market liquidity, a scenario which officials predicted would go on especially if the hotly debated VAT bill is finally passed by Congress.

The bellwether 91-day rate dropped to 6.319 percent, lower by 23.2 basis points from the previous week's level. The drop was forced by the very high volume of bids, which reached P9.95 billion compared with the government's debt offering of only P2 billion.

"The market has been very liquid, so despite concerns over several things such as the delay in the passage of the VAT, these have been offset (by too much cash)," National Treasurer Omar Cruz said in a briefing after yesterday's auction.

The 182- and 364-day rates also declined as banks scrambled for the short-term debt paper. The three-month government security fetched 7.574 percent, lower by 15.3 basis points from the previous week's, while the one-year debt instrument fell by 14.5 basis points to 8.533 percent.

The 182- and 364-day bills were also oversubscribed, as bids reached P7.21 billion and P8.56 billion, respectively. The government was only offering P2 billion for each maturity.

Cruz said liquidity in the market, made up mostly of banks, would further be beefed up by the estimated P45 billion in maturing government securities this week. He said banks were expected to reinvest their cash in treasury bills and bonds.

Yesterday's auction was the second consecutive week that short-term interest rates dropped across all tenors. Last week, all treasury rates declined as the market reacted positively to the better-than-programmed fiscal data for the first quarter. The government had announced that its budget deficit for the period reached only P63.5 billion, or 18 percent lower than the P77.8-billion official target.

Cruz said the drop in rates would further continue should the VAT (value-added tax) bill be passed by the legislature. He explained that the additional revenues from the VAT bill, estimated at between P65 billion and P80 billion, would lessen the government's need to borrow.

Under the VAT bill, the Arroyo administration's key measure to address the government's fiscal problem, the rate would be raised from 10 to 12 percent, while several VAT exemptions are to be lifted.

But while the bill was targeted to be passed by the end of April, the two chambers of Congress are still at a deadlock as to what final version to adopt. The Lower House has approved the executive's proposal for a 12-percent VAT, while the Senate prefers keeping the VAT rate at 10 percent and instead raise the corporate income tax rate from 32 to 35 percent.

Cruz also announced that the state-owned National Power Corp. would auction P5 billion in bonds on Thursday after it got the blessing of the Department of Finance.

TREASURY/ B5

Globe posts flat growth in Q1 profit

By Clarissa S. Batino

GLOBE Telecom Inc. yesterday reported discouraging results for the first quarter as net income reached only P3 billion, nearly the same as the P2.99 billion a year ago, on sustained weakness arising from declining subscriber take-up and softer sales.

In what appears to be follow-through weakness, this was the second consecutive quarter of declining profits for Globe. Net earnings in the fourth quarter of 2004 were also lower against the comparative period in 2003.

The company's profit in the first three months this year shrank despite gains from a higher exchange rate. The peso averaged at 56.28 to a dollar as of end-2004 against the end-March average of 54.94.

The country's second-biggest mobile company grew its subscriber base by only 400,000 from January to March, ending the first quarter with 12.9 million subscribers against 12.5 million in end-2004.

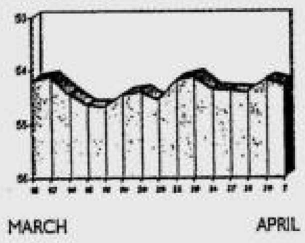
Of the total, about 2 million are Touch Mobile customers. The re-launch of the second brand in January finally allowed it to breach the 2-million mark.

GLOBE/ B4

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P54.25 = $1

As of 5 p.m., May 3, 2005

¥105.38 = $1

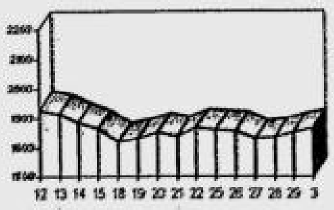
As of 5 p.m., May 2, 2005

GOLD: $429.20-429.70

per ounce Hong Kong, May 3, 2005

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B4)

Shares close 0.57% higher

SHARE prices closed 0.57 percent higher in light trade yesterday as bargain-hunters returned to the market after a three-day weekend to buy select stocks, dealers said.

They said trade was thin, with investors cautious due to concerns the central bank will have to raise interest rates to cope with rising inflation while a key government tax bill remains stalled in Congress.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index added 10.48 points to 1,865.11 after trading between 1,854.63 and 1,883.24 on turnover of 414 million shares worth P820 million.

The broader all-shares index rose 4.00 points to 1,141.27.

Gainers doubled losers 42 to 21, with 37 stocks unchanged.

The central bank will hold its monthly policy-setting meeting on Thursday, the same day that April inflation data will be released.

AFP

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Neda urges prudence in planned wage hike

'It has to be properly calibrated so as not to be inflationary'

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority (Neda) wants the government to exercise prudence in implementing the planned wage increase to keep it from aggravating the inflation scenario.

Neda Director General Romulo Neri said the amount of wage increase should not exceed what the economy could shoulder so as not to accelerate inflation. But he said the Neda was leaving it to the regional wage boards to determine the appropriate amount of increase in wages.

"It has to be properly calibrated so as not to be inflationary," Neri said in a phone interview. An inappropriately high increase in wages could cause a significant jump in demand for consumer products, and therefore push inflation further upward.

The Neda earlier said that average inflation for the year was already expected to hit 8 percent, or way above the 5- to 6-percent target of the government, due to high oil prices in the world market. In the first quarter alone, inflation stood at 8.4 percent.

Neri said it has kept its hands off the issue of how much should wages be increased, as the task has been entrusted to the regional wage boards. Malacañang has given them until the end of the month to release their wage proposal.

Militant labor groups are seeking a P125, daily across-the-board increase for workers in the private sector and a pay adjustment of P3,000 a month for government workers. But members of the business sector said they could only afford a P30 daily increase, lest they would be forced to trim down their workforce.

President Macapagal-Arroyo on Labor Day promised an increase in wages, especially for minimum income earners, to somehow ease the burden caused by soaring prices and the move to raise taxes. She has instructed Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas to convene the regional wage boards nationwide to determine the amount of increase.

But like the Neda, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas also advised the government to exercise caution on the planned wage increase so as not to create a negative impact on the economy.

BSP Assistant Governor Diwa Guinigundo was quoted as saying that a wage increase should only be at a maximum 6 percent this year and 5 percent next year. If wages will be increased higher than the figures, then the BSP might be forced to tighten its monetary policy to curb inflationary pressures. One tool used to tighten monetary policy is to increase interest rates.

The BSP added that the increase in wages should be matched with higher labor productivity so as not to create an upward pressure on consumer prices.

Neri earlier said that aside from inflation, high oil prices would also have an adverse effect on the country's gross domestic product and the balance of payments (BOP), or the difference between foreign exchange inflows and outflows.

He said the expected average increase in Dubai crude price of $20 a barrel this year would result in a one-percentage-point contraction in GDP.

The Neda chief said the government has to look for sources of growth that would counter the recessionary impact of high oil prices.

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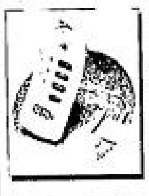
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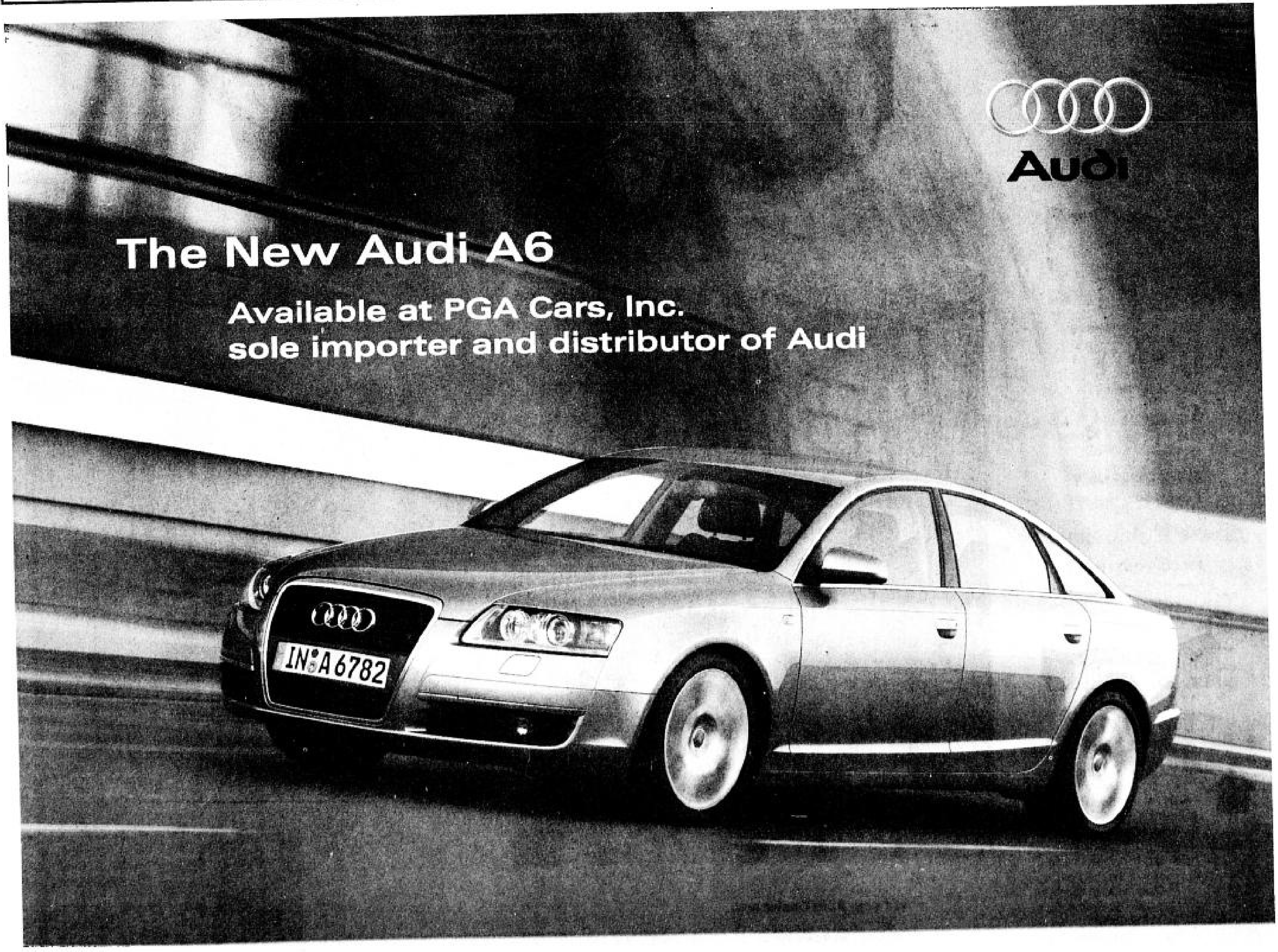
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Success.
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1995-2005: Celebrating Ten Successful Years in the Philippines

Hans-Peter Klaey
President & Chief Executive Officer
SAP Asia

Congratulations to SAP Philippines on its 10th year anniversary!

Over the past decade, SAP Philippines has been one of the fastest growing SAP subsidiaries with over 100 customer installations and an active partner network. You've made us all proud by successfully delivering innovative, cost-effective, and customized solutions along with an active partner network in more than 25 industry segments including manufacturing, consumer products, oil & gas, utilities, high tech, retail, public sector, and financial services.

SAP Philippines has demonstrated operational excellence and customer-focused passion over the years, with a focus on consistently delivering value to its customers of all sizes. The company has helped increase the business model flexibility and process efficiency of the most entrepreneurial Filipino businesses, an area that will continually drive increases in worker productivity.

As we celebrate a decade of excellence and partnership, we look forward to a future of more exciting opportunities for SAP and our customers and partners in the Philippines.

Krishnendu Datta
Managing Director
SAP Philippines & SAP Indonesia

Success. Advantage. Passion. These are the three words that best describe SAP Philippines' business after 10 prolific years.

Success. Our leadership as a business solutions provider reflects the successes of our valued customers and business partners. Over the last 10 years, we were given the privilege to forge strategic partnerships among the leaders of Philippine enterprises.

Advantage. Through SAP's leading edge business software solutions, more than 120 companies in the Philippines have seized the much-needed competitive advantage for today's global economy. This year, we bring this competitive advantage to small and mid-sized businesses (SMBs) through a wide-range of easy-to-implement, innovative, and best-fit solutions. We will leverage on our leadership and expertise at the enterprise space to create customized solutions for SMBs, and boost their potential as the country's most viable growth engine.

Passion. Trust that our passion for excellence will continue to drive us as a dynamic and zealous technology and business partner of Philippine progress. And, along with this commitment, we will continue to enrich our corporate social citizenship and build on what we had started this year with various local philanthropic organizations to attain a more meaningful relationship with the greater Philippine society.

We dedicate our 10th year anniversary to all our customers, partners and the Filipino people.

Thank you all!

SAP Philippines Celebrates a Perfect 10!

The Philippines' Best Run Businesses Run SAP

The success story of SAP Philippines is one that is created by the individual success stories of its customers. Since its incorporation in 1995, SAP Philippines has given its customers the ability to innovate and manage their business processes towards greater productivity. As a proud partner of majority of the country's largest and most dynamic businesses, SAP Philippines affirms that its global leadership comes from delivering superior customer satisfaction through best-in-class products and services.

Even before having a local office, the world's #1 business software solutions provider already began revolutionizing the way Filipinos run their business. SAP was already working with San Miguel Corporation, its first Philippine client, before the Philippine operations was established. To this day, SMC remains as the biggest SAP installation in the country, with a number of its subsidiaries also running SAP.

Indeed, the commitment of SAP to provide the world's leading business solutions to Philippine businesses of all sizes and shapes is unparalleled. On its 10th year anniversary, SAP Philippines looks forward to providing increased coverage of the Small and Medium Business (SMB) sector, and also looks back at some of its implementation milestones to showcase the competitive advantage that SAP solutions bring to businesses.

Kapamilya!

In 2001, the Philippines' largest media broadcasting company ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corporation invested in SAP to support the company's direction of providing a strong back-end support to all of the media company's front line businesses. Aside from its more than 95% reach of the country's television-owning households, the company has expanded into related businesses such as digital production, music recording, and merchandising.

"Our businesses are wide-spread and varied that is why we need a system that will seamlessly integrate our processes. SAP has the most advanced enterprise technology available and using this technology is key to our goal of providing best-in-class services and infrastructure to all our local and overseas subsidiaries," says Johnny Sy, ABS-CBN vice president for Information Technology.

Group Success

Ayala Corporation deployed SAP solutions to automate, standardize, and enhance its business processes, and achieve superior customer satisfaction. Ayala Corporation's highly successful implementation of SAP solutions has given companies within Ayala Corp. the opportunity to join the SAP family.

Today, the Ayala Group companies leveraging on the cost-effective benefits of a SAP's best-fit business software solutions are Honda Cars Makati, Ayala Land, Manila Water, Globe Telecom, and Integrated Microelectronics.

On time, Great value

Cebu Pacific, the domestic carrier that prides itself as an "on-time, great value airline," has been recently flying passengers to overseas destinations such as Hong Kong. It expects to realize continued improvements in business process productivity, logistics and financial management, as a result of its implementation of SAP.

"SAP's integrated systems will help us fully utilize our resources as we springboard for regional growth," says Cebu Pacific CEO Lance Gokongwei. "Capitalizing on a superior technology solution helps us in managing the efficiencies of our back-end processes as well as in the maintenance our fleet of 12 twin-engine aircrafts."

Fruits of Innovation

Savings from production to market is important to a company that processes approximately 700,000 tons of pineapples to deliver 20% of the world's processed pineapple products.

To help keep the price of its products affordable and of premium quality, as well as to provide excellent customer service, IT plays a key role at Del Monte Philippines Inc. The company's fully integrated operations from production to distribution brought about by implementing an SAP solution kept it globally competitive.

Del Monte President Alex Castillo says, "in order to implement improvements in customer service, cost-reduction and productivity-enhancement programs, investing in sound technology such as SAP, and continuous equipment upgrades help us maintain our leadership position in the industry."

Premier Healthcare Center

General Santos Doctors' Hospital, Inc. (GSDH), one of the primary health care centers in southern Philippines, strengthens its commitment to deliver first-rate healthcare services and medical specialties to its valued customers. This year, GSDH has acquired SAP Business One to realize this goal.

SAP Business One will enable GSDH to accurately monitor and send data to its internal stakeholders. SAP Business One enhances the viability of the institution by managing the company's performance at all levels, particularly in finance and human resources. On the short-term, GSDH would utilize SAP Business One to determine the correct service pricing for its various offerings, and the most cost-effective allocation of resources throughout the company.

Stronger for you

A leader in the cement industry, Holcim Philippines is committed to building its foundations for the society's future by providing quality products and services. To achieve this, Holcim must be able to provide the market with efficient cement distribution process and easy access to information 24/7.

Now, through a web-based ordering system powered by SAP, Holcim customers are able to get the current cement prices, get their billing statements, and access other types of reports for analysis.

Project Omega

As a utility firm, Manila Water Company can only deliver superior customer service if its internal processes are operating at optimum levels of efficiency. To support its modernization effort as part of its transition from a government-owned entity to a private company, Manila Water acquired mySAP ERP two years ago to automate, standardize, and integrate all its business processes. Today, customers of Manila Water are reaping the benefits of automated customer billings and payments processes.

"When we acquired mySAP, we dubbed the implementation as Project Omega. This is because we knew that it is the last enterprise system we will ever need," says Ding Carpio, former CIO and current Group Director for Capitol Works of Manila Water.

Overflowing with Service

Maynilad Water Services, the largest water utility company in the Philippines in terms of customer base, went live this March with SAP for Utilities. Now, its more than 6 million customers are able to transact with the branch offices, receive their water bills, update their payments and inquire about their water consumption through the SAP for Utilities Customer Billing and Financials System implemented at the head office and the 12 branch offices in Metro Manila.

Although the typical duration to implement a utilities-specific SAP project is 10-12 months, Maynilad went live with SAP in a record-breaking timeline of six months because of the necessity and urgency to streamline its business processes. Maynilad President Dr. Fiorello Estuar, an advocate of new technologies, chose SAP as he believes in leveraging on existing and proven solutions. With SAP for Utilities already running in next-door neighbour, Manila Water Company, it was easy for Dr. Estuar to convince the Maynilad Board to go with an SAP solution, which was considered as a strategic tool to the company's goal of being a profitable and modern business organization.

Maynilad's SAP project is also notable as the first SAP for Utilities implementation in Asia Pacific where an existing SAP customer (Manila Water Company) was involved as part of the delivery team.

Fueling Growth

Today, Petron is not only involved in gassing up a vehicle via its network of 32 oil depots and plants nationwide, it is also in the retail business through its chain of Treats outlets – convenience stores for motorists on the go.

As one of the early adopters of SAP technologies, Petron saw the value of an SAP solution as a key decision-making tool to immediately access mission-critical data for analysis, strategic planning and deployment.

"Investing in a technology that is able to deliver what we need, and what our customers need, is proof that we at Petron are serious about our business," says Lu Batugal, Business Systems Support Manager of Petron.

World-class Connectivity

The Philippine Long Distance and Telephone Company was established in 1928 to serve the Filipino people through its telecommunications services with three principal business groups: fixed line, wireless, and information and communications technology.

With more than ten affiliates and subsidiaries including Smart Telecommunications, PLDT's main concern was on how to keep track of the information coming from these different businesses. An efficient and reliable business intelligence solution was necessary to keep all the companies connected.

Ollie Odulio, PLDT Supply Chain Head shares, "We purchased SAP because what we needed was an integrating tool to unite our disparate systems. We are confident that using an SAP system to effectively manage our back-end and front-end processes will help maintain our position as the leading provider of local and international telecommunications services in the country."

Quantum Leap

Consumer package distributor Quantum Foods says its implementation of a 24/7 Internet-based enterprise solution from SAP has resulted in significant benefits that allowed it to compete very well against its much larger competitors. With an SAP system in place, Quantum was able to get information and generate reports in real-time; such as, detect over and under-stocked inventories.

Although a mid-sized company, Quantum Foods has gained the confidence of large enterprises such as Dole Philippines, whose products Quantum distributes in the market.

Because of the highly-successful implementation of the SAP system at Quantum, the company now stands as a favorite reference site for local and overseas companies that want to deploy an SAP solution in order to increase their profitability and competitiveness.

Pangmatagalan

Ramcar Group of Companies, the country's largest manufacturer and exporter of automotive battery products, is behind the trusted Motolite and Oriental brands.

Seven years ago, Ramcar implemented mySAP Business Suite in Motolite to help automate its tasks in payroll and order processing, production planning sales, and products distribution to the local market and overseas. Due to the benefits that Ramcar experienced using the system, it has decided to implement SAP in 2000 in its food business, which includes Kentucky Fried Chicken and Mister Donut.

Bountiful Catch

Determined to be competitive in the export business, fast-growing San Andres Fishing Industry (SAFI) has recently implemented SAP Business One, SAP's flagship product for small and mid-sized companies, to fully automate its various business transactions.

Incorporated in 1984, the General Santos-based company, which is engaged in tuna fishing and export, needed to control and optimize its resources by reducing unnecessary expenses and monitoring financial statements in real time.

With the capability to access information on their business performance virtually anytime and anywhere, SAFI now has the power to turn information into intelligence and seize other agribusiness opportunities for their future growth.

Hospital of the Future

St. Luke's Medical Center's commitment to provide patients with the best medical team and the most advanced medical equipment and technology gained another milestone with its adoption of mySAP ERP Solution last year.

By integrating all the administrative and clinical procedures, the SAP Solution supports the vision of St. Luke's to become a "hospital of the future" where a patient receives proper medical attention promptly through an integrated system that helps coordinate and optimize all aspects of patient care, from tracking in-patient and out-patient services, care planning and documentation to providing clinical care and aftercare management.

Energized and Performance-based HR

SPI Technologies is one of the companies that has been leveraging on SAP's HR solution to streamline its HR processes in keeping with its mission to "maintain an energized, performance-based culture where empowered employees can have a thriving career."

As the premier provider of content outsourcing services and solutions in the global business process outsourcing market, SPI Technologies helps more than 150 customers worldwide improve their operating efficiencies, lower costs, and strengthen competitive positioning.

A Giant Splash

From a backyard business in 1985, Splash Corporation ranks no. 6 in the personal care industry and belongs to the top 300 companies in the Philippines.

"When your organization grows big, you need a reliable system that will efficiently handle your back-end operations so you can focus more on product development and your customers," says Splash Chairman and CEO Rolando Hortaleza.

In 2003, Splash implemented SAP's enterprise resource planning solution to streamline the company's business processes at the plant level. The solution was designed to improve the company's supply chain by providing management with real-time information on market movements and condition. Splash is now connected with its 23 distributors, greatly increasing productivity in planning and accounting operations. This became possible as the SAP system did not only speak in the language of large enterprises, but can also be cascaded to Splash's distributors, which are mostly SMBs.

Already becoming a regional player, Splash is setting up offices overseas to market flagship products such as Maxi-peel and Extraderm.

A Sterling Example

Sterling Paper Products Enterprises, Inc. is one of the top manufacturers and distributors of paper products in the Philippines, with more than 50 years in the business. It has the most extensive product lines including photo albums, greeting cards, notebooks and specialty papers, and is also behind the Expressions Gifts and Stationery Shops.

As a strategy for growth, Sterling Paper in 1999, implemented SAP for Retail, a solution that addressed the information requirements of its entire business - from finance and accounting, to manufacturing, to warehouse and distribution to merchandising and assortment planning. The same SAP system is being used to centrally manage its 45 distribution outlets nationwide, and to efficiently manage supply chain and branch operation. Truly, SAP has helped Sterling Paper to be true to its tagline, "Definitely High Quality, Definitely Sterling."

Joseph Lim, President and COO of Sterling Paper Group of Companies, says, "On hindsight after seeing the benefits of having a fully-integrated enterprise-wide information system, I believe we made the right decision. Our partnership with SAP will continue to grow as Sterling Paper Group of Companies endeavors to expand and diversify our business."

Super Value

"How much and how often should we replenish our over 50,000 sku's?" "What is our stock inventory level of an sku at any one point in time?" "What has been ordered, received, stored, picked and shipped?" Such are the intricacies involved in running a FMCG retail company, thus prompting supermarket giant Supervalue to adopt SAP's technology to maintain its edge over its competitors.

"SAP for Retail helps us answer these questions and serves as a real-time management tool that contributes to our operational efficiencies, hence top and bottom line," says Manny Fong, Jr., Managing Director of Supervalue, Inc.

At present, Supervalue has 25 retail stores and plans to expand to up to 50 in the next five years. It operates nationwide under the banner names, SM Supermarket, Save More Supermarket, and Supersale Club.

First-rate Customer Service

In 2002, Unilever Philippines, a leading manufacturer of home and personal care products, implemented a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution called mySAP CRM. mySAP CRM greatly improved Unilever's call center capability, boosting the productivity of the company's customer service and consumer advisory.

Mita Cabinian, Unilever Philippines' Country Head for IT says when Unilever went scouting for a CRM solution a couple of years ago, it wanted a solution that will meet the flexibility and demands of its customers. Ultimately Unilever chose SAP.

"mySAP CRM enabled faster response time to queries raised by our customers, provided for effective maintenance of our customer database, and gave the company easier access to customer information for analysis and strategy development," she shares.

Unilever Philippines is the first to implement mySAP CRM among the Unilever offices in the region. Recently, Unilever also successfully implemented SAP's Advanced Planner and Optimizer (APO) solution.

SAP Partners

SAP Philippines owes its 10-year success and milestones to the mutual support and collaboration of its global and local partners, among them: IBM Philippines, HP Philippines, Sun Microsystems, Magnus Philippines, Magnus Consulting Inc., ANSI, IESC, WTSI, Headstrong, SMITS, Bayantrade.com Inc., and Team Synergia. These partners enable SAP to deliver its commitment to provide Philippine companies with leading-edge business software solutions that will help them win over the challenges of a fast-paced, highly competitive global business environment.

'The Best of SAP World Tour' Comes to Manila

Today, businesses and organizations are under intense pressure to meet strategic goals, develop flexible business processes, drive profitability, tighten corporate governance, and stimulate innovation and growth, while containing costs and maintaining operational control.

On July 26-27, 2005 at the EDSA Shangri-La Hotel, SAP Philippines hosts the Philippine leg of 'The Best of SAP World Tour', so that companies here can learn about SAP's unique formula for a company's growth. Dubbed as the SAP Philippines Summit 2005, the two-day event will gather SAP experts and customers, and industry analysts to tackle crucial business issues during the presentations, industry- and IT-specific breakout tracks, and focused planning sessions.

In today's complex business environment, SAP has the years of experience required to foster insight and drive innovation throughout the entire organization – no matter the size, no matter the industry. SAP solutions with its rich, industry-specific functionality help streamline business processes necessary for business growth.

The SAP Philippines Summit 2005 will offer experience, insight and innovation, and raise awareness on how companies can achieve real business value and gain real profit for their organization by harnessing the potential business impact of SAP solutions. As a thought leader, SAP will also share its insight on the new role of IT, by changing the perception of IT from infrastructure provider to business enabler. SAP will also launch its newest business software solution for small to medium businesses, which is now making SAP the best supplier of reliable business solutions for all market segments.

For event registration and information, please contact Ms. Cris Mendoza of SAP Philippines at Tel. No. (632) 848 0181 or email: cris.mendoza@sap.com

About SAP - SAP is the world's leading provider of business software solutions. Today, more than 27,000 customers in over 120 countries run more than 91,500 installations of SAP® software—from distinct solutions addressing the needs of small and midsize businesses to enterprise-scale suite solutions for global organizations. Powered by the SAP NetWeaver™ platform to drive innovation and enable business change, mySAP™ Business Suite solutions are helping enterprises around the world improve customer relationships, enhance partner collaboration and create efficiencies across their supply chains and business operations. SAP industry solutions support the unique business processes of more than 25 industry segments, including high tech, retail, public sector and financial services. With subsidiaries in more than 50 countries, the company is listed on several exchanges, including the Frankfurt stock exchange and NYSE under the symbol "SAP" (Additional information at http://www.sap.com)*

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The coup that never happened

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

TWO weeks ago was my birthday and I wasn't feeling too good I went to breakfast knowing my wife would be pleasant and say "Happy Birthday!" and probably would have a present for me. As it turned out, she didn't even say good morning, let alone any happy birthday. I thought, well, that's wives for you, the children would remember. The children came in to breakfast and didn't say a word either. So I left for the office feeling pretty despondent. As I walked into my office, my secretary said, "Good morning, Boss, Happy Birthday." I felt a little better that someone had remembered. I worked until noon, then she knocked on my door and said, "You know, it's such a beautiful day outside and it's your birthday. Let's go to lunch, just you and me." I said, "That's the greatest thing I've heard all day. Let's go!" We went to lunch. We didn't go where we normally go; instead we went out to a private little place. We had two martinis and enjoyed ourselves tremendously. On the way back to the office, she said, "You know, it's such a beautiful day. We don't need to go back to the office, do we?" I said, "No, I guess not." She said, "Let's go to my apartment." After arriving there she said, "Boss, if you don't mind, I'll go into the bedroom and slip into something more comfortable." She disappeared for about five minutes, then came out carrying a huge birthday cake, followed by my wife, children, and dozens of our friends, all singing Happy Birthday. And I just sat there ... on the couch ... naked! This amusing story was sent to me by a reader.

* * *

Two rabbits were crossing the road when the husband was run over by a tricycle. He was rushed to the hospital where the surgeons worked to stem the bleeding of his carottid artery. Unfortunately, he lost so much blood that he was brain-dead for 10 minutes before they resuscitated him. The surgeon approached Mrs. Rabbit looking grim. "I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is that your husband is alive; the bad news is that he will always be a vegetable."

* * *

On Sunday, fearful of hand-to-hand fighting in the streets of Makati, I put barbed wire all around the house, electrified the fence and set my laser printer to stun. Fortunately, all these precautions were unnecessary so the rally should continue. It is very disappointing that the lawmakers have not yet passed some version of the VAT bill but this may have been deliberately deferred beyond May 1st so as not to unduly provoke the masses. This makes sense, but time is of the essence and we recently received another downgrade.

Last year, foreign brokers started buying our stocks and the index outperformed almost every other stock market. However, they are getting fed up with our procrastination in raising revenue to reduce the budget deficit, and for the past two months they have been selling. As a result, the Phisix has dropped 300 points, not 177 as I mentioned last week.

The rate of selling has been increasing and last Thursday, the foreign selling reached a record 25 percent of the net turnover (excluding cross sales). Today, they sold another P122 million. Not only does it show that foreign investors are getting fed up with us, but also the amount they have sold so far is only a small fraction of what they bought last year. So if we don't get moving soon, the selling could go on for a long time.

The Bangko Sentral has warned us that inflation may reach 8.6 percent in April and that they are ready to increase rates in order to stem the rise. So with Alan Greenspan set to raise rates for the eighth time to 3 percent, we will almost certainly follow. To date, interest rates have been falling across the board, from the 91-day treasury bill to the 10-year bond, but I think that they have bottomed and that the trend will reverse very soon.

The President promised a wage review this month and I will stick to my forecast of P25-P30 a day in Metro Manila and less for the provinces. Businessmen say that the time is not

BEARBULL/ B5

GG & A Club Shares

SEC License Broker #007575 * As of May 2, 2005

CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club "A" (Filipino)	1,100,000	1,000,000
Alabang Country Club "B" (Foreigner)	1,100,000	1,050,000
Baguio Country Club	550,000	500,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	40,000	-
Calatagan Golf Club "B"	70,000	-
Camp John Hay	175,000	-
Canlubang	-	450,000
Canyon Woods	140,000	-
Capitol Hills	95,000	-
Cebu Country Club	1,900,000	1,600,000
Celebrity Sports Club	120,000	80,000
Club Filipino	150,000	100,000
Eagleridge "A"	200,000	180,000
Eagleridge "B"	290,000	-
Eagleridge "C"	300,000	-
Fairways "C3"	-	300,000
Forest Hills "A"	140,000	100,000
Forest Hills "B"	200,000	-
Forest Hills "C"	200,000	-
Makati Sports Club "A"	240,000	170,000
Makati Sports Club "B"	250,000	-
Manila Golf (Corporate)	11,500,000	Please Call
Manila Golf (Individual)	11,400,000	Please Call
Manila Polo	2,250,000	2,050,000
Manila Southwoods "A"	430,000	350,000
Manila Southwoods "B"	-	700,000
Manila Yacht Club	400,000	300,000
Metroclub "A"	150,000	-
Mimosa (Individual)	-	100,000
Mimosa (Corporate)	-	300,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "A"	250,000	180,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "C"	300,000	180,000
Orchard Golf Club "A"	180,000	150,000
Orchard Golf Club "C"	450,000	-
Quezon City Sports Club	140,000	-
Spa & Lodge	650,000	500,000
Sta. Elena "A"	1,300,000	1,150,000
Sta. Elena "B"	1,300,000	-
Subic Bay Yacht (Corporate)	170,000	-
Subic Bay Yacht (Individual)	100,000	-
Tagaytay Country Club	380,000	350,000
Tagaytay Highlands	750,000	650,000
Tagaytay Midlands	700,000	Please Call
Valle Verde (Individual)	120,000	-
Valle Verde (Corporate)	200,000	-
Valley Golf	300,000	230,000
Wack-Wack Golf Club	6,700,000	6,300,000

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of May 3, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	4,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	25.5	26	25	26	149,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	48.5	49	47.5	48	3,017,600
China Banking Corp.	670	670	670	670	100
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.67	0.69	0.67	0.68	760,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	47	47.5	47	47.5	125,400
International Exch. Bank	18.25	18.25	18.25	18.25	210,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	31.5	32.5	31.5	31.5	661,500
Philippine National Bank	33	33	30.5	30.5	5,600
Security Bank Corp.	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	200
Union Bank of the Phil.	26.5	26.5	25.5	25.5	81,800
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	1.92	1.92	1.92	1.92	5,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2450	2450	2450	2450	140
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1	1	1	1	20,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1650	1660	1650	1660	940
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	14	15.25	14	14.25	7,400
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.08	1.14	1.08	1.12	4,148,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	820	825	815	815	14,250
Ipeople Inc.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	3,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.15	3.15	3.05	3.05	786,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1400	1415	1400	1405	82,670
Ivantage Corp.	0.65	0.65	0.64	0.65	540,000
Philweb Corp.	0.019	0.019	0.018	0.019	33,700,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	300
Manila Electric Co. B	22.5	23.25	22.5	22.75	427,500
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.2	6.2	6	6	2,211,000
Petron Corp.	3.25	3.5	3.25	3.45	2,226,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv.	7.3	7.3	7.2	7.3	383,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	60,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.1	1.2	1.08	1.2	2,560,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.57	0.6	0.57	0.6	3,020,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	2.8	2.85	2.8	2.85	189,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	3	3	3	3	35,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Jollibee Foods Corp.	29	29	28	28.5	310,600
San Miguel Corp. A	57.5	58	57.5	58	37,500
San Miguel Corp. B	83	83.5	83	83	69,100
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	7,430,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	16,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	15,000,000
Ayala Corp.	7	7	6.8	6.9	6,288,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.4	4.55	4.4	4.55	2,306,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.033	0.033	0.031	0.031	7,400,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.94	1.96	1.94	1.96	402,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	30,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	11	11	11	11	1,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	30,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.96	0.99	0.95	0.95	8,580,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	10,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.3	0.32	0.3	0.31	26,220,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	2.65	2.7	2.65	2.65	1,307,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	8.1	8.2	7.9	8	251,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	43.5	44	43	44	271,900
Global Equities Inc.	0.085	0.085	0.0825	0.0825	500,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.14	1.14	100,000
Medco Holdings	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	150,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.32	1.34	1.3	1.3	2,996,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.36	0.36	0.35	0.36	30,130,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	200,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.27	150,000
SM Investments Corp.	249	249	247	248	860,780
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.22	0.225	0.2	0.2	4,700,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.68	10,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	8	8	8	8	5,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.46	1.46	1.3	1.3	9,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1.18	1.26	1.16	1.18	13,001,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	220,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.54	1.56	1.52	1.52	436,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	13.5	14	13.5	13.75	277,700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series P	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	2,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	3,300
PLDT 10% Pref Series Cc	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	200
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	7.9	7.9	7.7	7.7	3,874,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.84	0.88	0.84	0.88	3,550,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	2,300,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.22	0.22	0.21	0.21	1,580,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.38	0.39	0.37	0.38	5,970,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.42	1.46	1.42	1.44	3,198,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	800,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	200,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	4.6	4.75	4.6	4.75	126,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	350,000
SM Development Corp.	1.64	1.64	1.64	1.64	100,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.5	7.6	7.2	7.2	6,327,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	74,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5	5	4.8	4.9	105,000
Benguet Corp. A	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	23,000
Benguet Corp. B	32	35	32	35	3,100
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.5	3.4	2.5	3.4	26,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.34	0.34	0.31	0.32	140,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.35	0.35	0.34	0.34	4,260,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	12,200,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.021	0.021	0.021	0.021	17,300,000
Omico Corp.	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	22,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.1	1.1	1.06	1.06	734,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	33.5	33.5	33	33	134,700
OIL					
Interport Res.	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	4,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0055	0.006	0.0055	0.006	27,000,000
Pacifica	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	5,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.17	0.18	0.165	0.165	17,590,000

DISCLOSURES

ALASKA Milk Corp. appointed by Kellogg Asia Marketing Inc. for the sale and distribution of Kellogg products in the Philippines effective May 1.

* * *

FORUM Pacific Inc. denied having any knowledge or information to the increase in the trading of their share price by 50 percent from P0.16 to P0.24.

* * *

FIRST Philippine Holdings Corp. announced the additional listing of 7,315,135 common shares availed of and fully paid under the company's employee stock purchase plan (ESPP) and executive stock option plan (ESOP). This brings the total common shares listed under ESPP and ESOP to 27,001,007 shares.

* * *

BELLE Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 3, 3 p.m. at Discovery Suites, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. Only stockholders of record as of April 29 are entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

* * *

SUN Life Financial Inc. declared a cash dividend of C$0.24 per share on the outstanding common shares of the corporation and C$ 0.406678 on the outstanding Class A non-cumulative preferred shares series 1 of the corporation to all its shareholders of record date May 25 and payable on June 30.

Compiled by Chona Galang, PDI Research

Globe posts flat . . .

From page B1

Globe's service revenue in the first three months grew by only 5 percent at P13.5 billion as average revenue per user dropped. Worsening matters was a 24-percent increase in operating costs and expenses at P6.6 billion.

The joint venture of Ayala Corp. and Singapore Telecom attributed the increase in cost to more aggressive marketing initiatives as well as expenses related to network expansion. Globe ended the first quarter with 4,106 cellular sites.

"The first quarter of the year was a mixture of challenges and good results," Globe president and chief executive officer Gerardo Ablaza Jr. said in a statement.

"Although Globe Prepaid Plus' gross take-up remained robust, net additions were softened by rotational churn from SIM-swap dynamics," Ablaza added.

In the first quarter of 2004, Globe added only 277,197 subscribers after weeding out customers who fled to the competition.

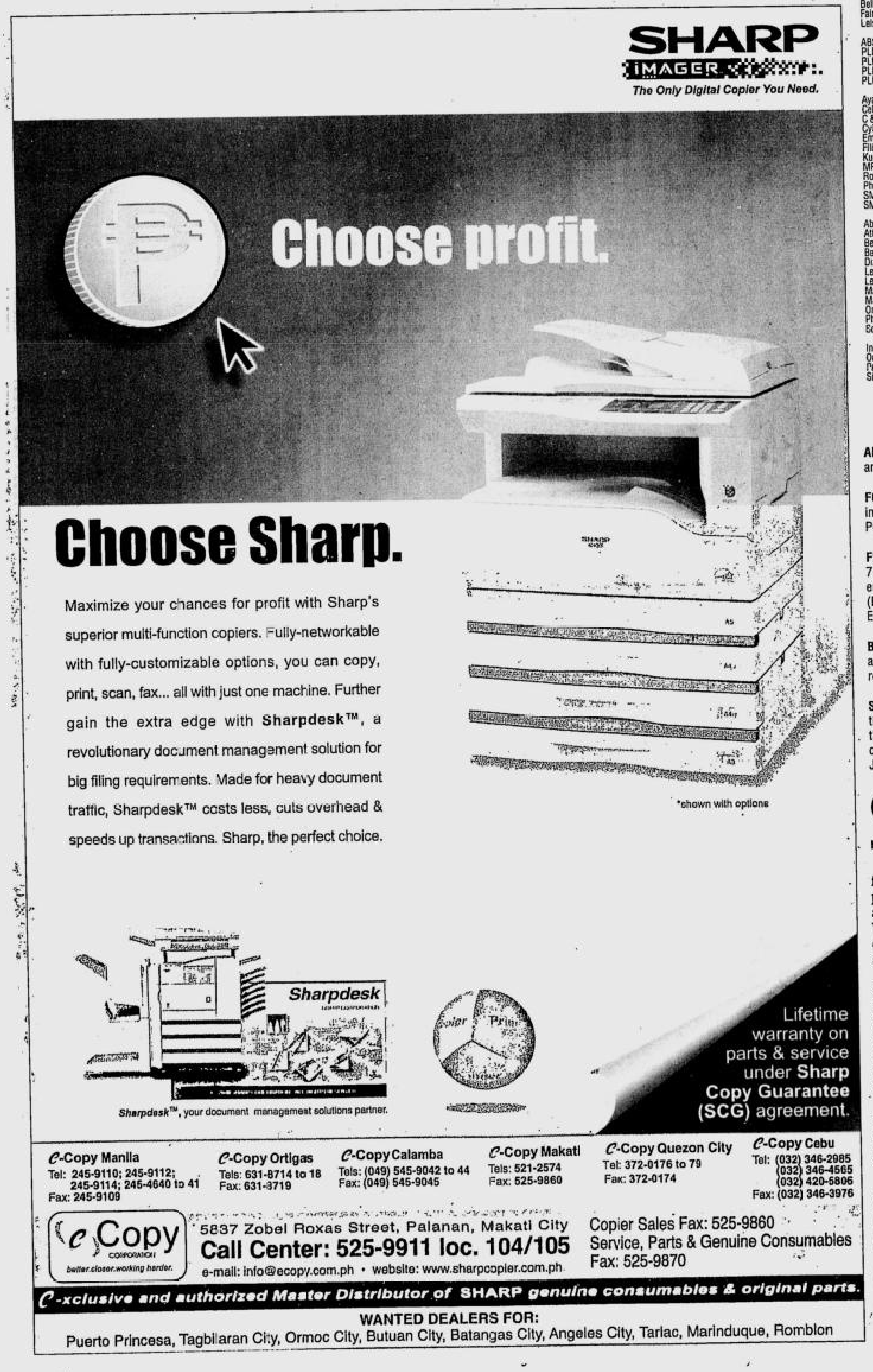
Ablaza said he hoped that by the second half, the churn rate or the percentage of subscribers leaving the network should ease. He said the company would continue to court subscribers from the lower segment of the market and try to entice them to expand the use of their mobile phones.

The company's total asset base stood at P125.1 billion, with total debt dropping further by 4 percent from the previous year to P53.2 billion as of end-March 2005.

Capital expenditures amounted to P5.1 billion. Free cashflow remained strong at P4.7 billion or 35 percent higher than the P3.5 billion recorded in the first quarter of 2004.

The company continued to introduce new products and innovations during the quarter, which included G2P, a new postpaid service providing the subscriber with a prepaid line using one mobile number and one SIM.

Globe also continued expanding its G-Cash service. As of end-March, registered users reached close to 800,000 from only 200,000 at the beginning of the year.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COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

THERE is apparently a wealth of a condo market that can be trawled in Pasay City, Binondo, and similar congested neighborhoods parallel to Roxas Boulevard, but whose residents would still prefer to stay nearer to Manila rather than Makati or The Fort.

Proof of this largely unheralded market phenomenon is that taipan George Ty's Federal Land launched last weekend its fourth condominium project in three years on the reclaimed bayside area.

Old-time residents fleeing the congestion, filth, tricycles, jeepneys and neighborhood thugs in those districts, but who still yearn for bayside living are crossing the boulevard to live in gated condos that Federal Land COO (child of owner) Alfred Ty is only too happy to sell them.

A number of expatriates married to locals who want their own piece of the famed Manila Bay sunset, at P70,000 per square meter, complete the buyers' profiles of the resort-themed, every bedroom/sala with its own balcony, Bay Garden complex.

Not only is the migration limited to residents.

Across the Edsa-wide, but billboard-uncluttered Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard, the year-old Manila Doctors College, also by the Tys, is already rushing an annex for its surging nursing student population.

Further down the intersection of the Edsa extension, the Blue Wave strip mall, also built by the Tys, has far outstripped its Fort inspiration, also anchored on a gas station.

According to the young Ty, the Pancake House branch there is now the country's highest grossing restaurant per square meter, with motorists and customers attracted by free parking, sea air and that even rarer commodity in Metro Manila, wide-open spaces.

Money-go-round

• THE CLASS suit against the College Assurance Plan Group has been raffled off to Judge Romeo Barza, the same Makati RTC judge now hearing the rehabilitation case filed by Pacific Plans.

CAP class-suit lawyer Maricel Pascual-Lopez said she would also cross over and join the opposition to the Pacific Plans rehabilitation case.

• TIP to property owners: Petron is looking for a number of gasoline station sites that would ring the Makati commercial district.

• UNITED Laboratories has finally posted a photograph of its new chair, Jocelyn Campos-Hess, on its website. But unlike the younger brother whom she replaced, there is absolutely no biographical information provided in the Unilab website about the pharmaceutical giant's new chief.

Heard through the grapevine

MORGAN Stanley has obtained a long-overdue Philippine government regulatory approval to securitize overseas Filipino workers remittances and float $2 billion in investment grade government bonds, with the FCDU accounts held by Philippine banks as the underlying asset pool.

Proceeds from the bond issue would be used by the Department of Finance to refinance costlier foreign-denominated borrowings.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

BOI approves P9M auto, machine parts project

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BOARD of Investments last week approved a P9.4-million investment in the manufacture of machine and automotive parts.

BOI data showed that project proponent Mectron Philippines Inc., a Japanese majority-owned firm, would make machine parts, such as bar feeder for lathe and milling machines, for export to Thailand.

As for auto parts, Mectron plans to sell its output to ecozone locator firms, which export products related to the automotive industry.

At full capacity, Mectron's project would create 25 new jobs and produce 600 pieces of machine parts and 412,000 units of automotive parts a year.

The automotive sector has been identified as one of 11 preferred areas of investment activities that are qualified for tax holidays, duty-free importation of capital equipment and other incentives under the 2005 Investment Priorities Plan.

The BOI has yet to issue the specific guidelines for the 2005 IPP.

According to the Department of Trade and industry, the country's exports of auto parts and machine parts has been stable for the past five years and had increased in 2002 and 2003.

Automotive exports amounted to $1.3 million in 2003, up 8.3 percent from $1.2 million in 2002.

During the same period, exports of machine parts increased 16.7 percent to $168 million from $144 million.

Trade Secretary Juan B. Santos said that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) comprised the bulk of the country's exporters and that the government would continue to support their development through incentives.

In an earlier report, the BOI said it approved incentives for Albay Agro Industrial Development Corp.'s P245-million abaca pulp manufacturing project.

According to the BOI, the project would enable Alindeco's production of abaca pulp to increase at an estimated 3,000 metric tons a year, 99 percent of which would be exported to Japan.

Abaca pulp is used for the manufacture of specialty papers, such as currency or bank notes, electrolytic condenser paper, filter paper, tea bags, meat casings and cigarette paper, among others.

12 pre-need firms do not have dealer's licenses, says SEC exec

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

TWELVE pre-need firms were not able to secure their dealer's licenses from the Securities and Exchange Commission this year, according to an SEC official.

The 12 firms are College Assurance Plan Philippines Inc., CAP Pension, Platinum Plans, Pacific Plans Inc., Celestial Memorial Plans, East Asia Plans, FCM Plans Inc., Garden of Memories Memorial Plans Inc., Gillamac Life & Pension Plans Inc., Pension & Retirement Plans Corp., Samson Memorial Plans, and Special Plans Inc.

Gerard Lukban, Commission secretary, said nine of the firms had stopped selling pre-need plans.

Some, like Platinum Plans, are trying to comply with SEC requirements, Lukban added.

Pre-need firms are assessed based on adequacy of capital, and the liquidity of its trust fund or the ability to convert assets readily into cash.

Out of the 45 pre-need firms—consisting of education, life and pension plan providers—registered with the SEC, 33 have permits to sell plans.

These are the Ayala Plans Inc., Berkley International Plans Inc., City Plans Inc., Classic Plans Inc., Cocoplans Inc., Destiny Financial Plans Inc. (formerly United Systems Plans Inc.), Eduplan Philippines Inc., Eternal Plans Inc., First Country Plans Inc., First Union Plans Inc., Grayline Plans Inc., Himlayang Pilipino Plans Inc., Ideal Pension Plans Corp., Legacy Consolidated Plans Inc., Lifetime Plans Inc., Loyola Plans Consolidated Inc., Manulife Financial Plans Inc., Mercantile Careplans Inc., Millenium Education & Pension Corp., Paz Memorial Service Inc., Permanent Plans Inc., PET Plans Inc., Philam Plans Inc., Primeplan International Corp., Provident International Plans Inc., Prudentialife Plans Inc., Pryce Plans Inc., Sun Life Financial Plans Inc., St. Peter Life Plan Inc., TPG Corp., Transnational Plans Inc., and Trusteeship Plans Inc.

Sales of pre-need firms dropped 18.2 percent in January as the number of plans also went down by 7.8 percent.

In a monthly sales report with the SEC, gross sales hit P2.3 billion against P2.8 billion during the same month last year.

Pension plans, which accounted for the bulk of gross sales in January, fell 45.7 percent to P894.9 million from P1.65 billion in the same month a year ago. The number of pension plans sold also declined 40 percent to 12,844.

Education plans also slid to P777.52 million from P971.16 million during the same period last year. The number of education plans dipped 31.68 percent to 6,847.

Life plans on the other hand braced the general weakness as it spiked 223.7 percent to P629.04 million from P194.33 million.

The number of life plans soared 126.6 percent to 15,822.

Despite this performance, the pre-need industry is expected to grow sales by more than 21 percent this year, driven by higher investment income from higher interest rates and by tapping new markets in the provinces, officers of the Philippine Federation of Pre-need Plan Companies Inc. (PFPPCI) earlier said.

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Bear, Stearns confident in RP despite fiscal woes

By Michelle V. Remo

US-BASED Bear, Stearns & Co. Inc. has expressed confidence that the Philippines would be able to meet its loan obligations despite the country's debilitating fiscal problem, as its foreign exchange inflows remained robust.

The investment bank shrugged off fears that the Philippines could suffer from an Argentinean type of fiscal crisis, where Argentina was forced to default on its loans.

The Philippines' foreign exchange inflows are much healthier than that of Argentina, it noted.

"The positive aspect of the Philippines' financial profile is its strong foreign exchange income flow, which stems mainly from electronics exports and workers' remittances," the bank said in its latest paper on the Philippine economy.

The bank noted that electronics exports, which account for about 70 percent of the country's total exports, grew 10 percent last year.

It likewise cited the 17.1-percent year-on-year growth in remittances from overseas Filipino workers in the first two months of the year.

It also noted that in the January-to-April period, foreign portfolio investments surged to $1.5 billion, 17 times more than the amount recorded during the same period last year.

"This relatively buoyant external performance has provided the Philippines with a considerable degree of insulation from, at least in the near term, its rising government debt burden," it added.

Representatives of Bear, Stearns visited the Philippines last month to get latest updates on pressing fiscal issues, such as deliberations over the long-delayed passage of the value-added tax bill and the progress of the privatization of state-owned National Power Corp.

Bearbull

From page B4

ripe, but they have been saying this for as long as I can remember. Look at the recent quarterly results. ICT doubled its profits from P500 million to P1 billion and is contracting for two more countries. ALI doubled its 1st quarter profits from P528 million to P1.2 billion. Even after deducting a non-recurring gain of P400 million, growth is still very healthy. FPH profits rose from P3.7 billion to P4.5 billion, after a one-time provision of P1.2 billion for Meralco. FLI reported sales of houses up 50 percent and MEG announced profits up 32 percent. It does not seem to me that business is doing badly.

A far more serious problem is that our present minimum wage is $5.50 a day, soon to reach $6. This is three times as much as unskilled laborers earn in several other Asian countries. I learned from Bloomberg that in South America, 100 million people earn less than $1 a day. I also discovered that plasma screens are now being produced in Mexico. How can we possibly compete?

Turning to the US, economists confidently predicted that GDP in the 1st quarter would slow from 3.8 percent in the 4th quarter of 2004 to 3.5 percent. Their estimates were hopelessly optimistic and the actual figure of 3.1 percent sent the DOW crashing 128 points. Not only is the economy slowing faster than expected, but also consumer spending has risen 40 percent so that the threat of inflation is ever present in the mind of the FED. Another increase tomorrow is a foregone conclusion and it will probably continue to 3.5 percent or even 4 percent by year's end.

The fall in the price of crude oil to below $50 a barrel is a welcome relief, but may prove temporary so the current rally may soon fizzle out. JP Morgan has just downgraded the yearend S&P 500 index from 1,275 to 1,125, slightly below what it is now. Earnings growth has deteriorated steadily from 20 percent a year ago to 8.3 percent.

Europe is stuck with minimal GDP and double-digit unemployment in France and Germany. Allowing mobility of labor from another 10 poor countries to the European bloc is causing increased unemployment in the wealthier countries together with racial tension. Ultimately, the entire structure will collapse as having one fixed currency for 25 countries with widely varying wage structures and unemployment is impossible in the long run.

As for Japan, consumer spending has fallen for the second month and the country is back in its 8th year of recession. The Japanese prime minister said that if the US turns down, the outlook for Japan would be bleak. That was before the US announced its GDP of 3.1 percent. This leaves China with its foot stuck on the accelerator and still growing at 9.5 percent in the first quarter. However, China has massive bad debts within its banking system and it may have to raise interest rates or revalue its currency by about 4 percent. It is trying to slow down to 8.6 percent this year and 7.5 percent next year in a soft landing. This will be difficult to achieve and if they succeed, then there must be a global slowdown as China is the growth engine of the entire planet.

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United States	Dollar	0.777545	1.000000	54.3320
Japan	Yen	0.007404	0.009522	0.5173
United Kingdom	Pound	1.473136	1.894600	102.9374
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.099733	0.128266	6.9689
Switzerland	Franc	0.649686	0.835561	45.3977
Canada	Dollar	0.619755	0.797067	43.3062
Singapore	Dollar	0.475301	0.611284	33.2123
Australia	Dollar	0.606084	0.779484	42.3509
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.062507	2.652590	144.1205
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.207340	0.266660	14.4882
Brunei	Dollar	0.473853	0.609422	33.1111
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000082	0.000105	0.0057
Thailand	Baht	0.019684	0.025316	1.3755
UAE	Dirham	0.211704	0.272272	14.7931
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.286100	69.8764
Argentina	Peso	0.267888	0.344531	18.7191
Brazil	Real	0.309409	0.397931	21.6204
Denmark	Kroner	0.134335	0.172768	9.3868
India	Rupee	0.017891	0.023010	1.2502
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.204644	0.263193	14.2998
Mexico	New Peso	0.070404	0.090547	4.9196
New Zealand	Dollar	0.566765	0.728916	39.6035
South Africa	Rand	0.127898	0.164487	8.9369
Korea	Won	0.000777	0.000999	0.0543
Taiwan	NT Dollar	0.074818	0.031918	1.7347

Treasury

From page B1

The proceeds of the auction will be used for its financing and operational requirements this year.

Cruz said Napocor could adjust its borrowing to P7 billion should there be a big demand. The scheduled borrowing of Napocor on Thursday will be one of the few times that the debt-ridden power firm will be borrowing on its own, although the debt offering will carry a sovereign guarantee.

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DTI: Napocor rate hike won't affect prices of basic goods

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE RECENTLY approved power rate hike of the National Power Corp. will have no immediate and serious impact on the prices of basic goods and prime commodities, according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

Napocor has announced that it will increase rates by an average of 36.25 centavos a kWh. The new rates will be reflected in the May billing of its clients.

In turn, the Manila Electric Co., Napocor's biggest customer, will pass on the increase in rates and charge its customers an additional 21 to 22 centavos.

The higher rates will be reflected in the June billing of end-consumers.

Trade Secretary Juan B. Santos said that based on the latest analysis of the DTI's Bureau of Trade Regulation and Consumer Protection, power rate consisted only up to 2.8 percent of the total production component of most manufactured products.

"Due to such small cost of production attributed to electricity costs, any impact on retail prices will be hardly felt," Santos said.

"(S)hould there be an impact, it would only take effect later than when the increased rates appear on the monthly bill," he said. "Retailers should replenish their existing inventory at current prices."

In a related development, Subic EnerZone Corp., the power utility serving the Subic freeport area, yesterday said that its customers would pay 10 centavos less per kilowatt-hour after it successfully cut its systems loss by half to an average of 7.87 percent starting last March.

DTI/B7

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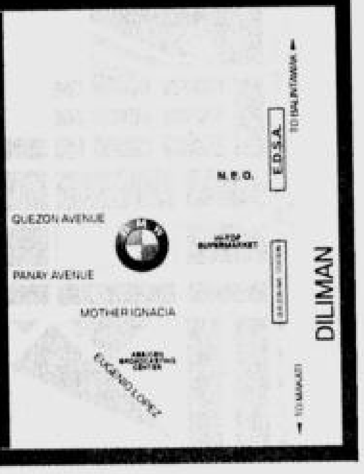

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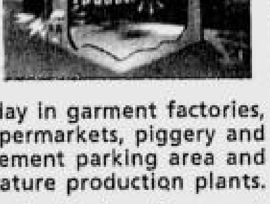

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Bangko Sentral raises BOP surplus goal by 84%

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas jacked up its 2005 balance of payment (BOP) surplus target by about 84 percent to factor in the stronger inflow of migrant remittances and foreign portfolio investments.

From $464 million, the BSP increased its BOP surplus goal to $852 million.

In a press briefing yesterday, BSP officer in charge Amando Tetangco Jr. said the increase was also influenced by the recent changes in the country's BOP accounting method, which significantly reduced the amount of errors and omissions.

"There's improvement in OFW (overseas Filipino workers) remittances and in portfolio investments inflow," Tetangco said.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the economy and the rest of the world. Its' major components are the current account and the capital and financial account.

The current account records trade in goods and services.

Any transaction that results in the payment by a Philippine resident, such as those for importation, is considered a deficit item. Any transaction that results in the receipt of foreign exchange such as exportation or inward remittances is a surplus item.

Tetangco said the country's current account surplus would likely hit $1.3 billion this year, higher than the previous projection of $1.2 billion. The capital and financial account surplus was seen to slow down to $300 million from $600 million due to the shift to a new BOP accounting method.

With the new methodology, the errors and omissions in the BOP, also known as net unclassified items, will be reduced to about $700 million from the $1.3 billion under the previous forecast.

The BSP now expects OFW remittances to hit at least $9.4 billion this year, higher than the all-time record of $8.5 billion registered in 2004. The previous forecast was more conservative at $8.6 billion.

With the new accounting method, OFWs are now classified into residents (income account) and non-residents (current transfers) in accordance with a one-year residency rule recommended in the BOP manual.

There was likewise an adjustment in the importation data to correct the understatement of consigned raw materials for electronics, thereby providing a better representation of the electronics industry that is more import-dependent than what was suggested by the old numbers.

At the same time, trade credits are now based on surveys and external debt reports, compared to the previous system of deriving trade receivables and payables from data on goods shipments and payments.

The computation of direct and portfolio investments was also changed to include transactions which bypass the banking system, such as resident investment abroad.

The reduction in the Philippine BOP's net unclassified items now put the level to about 0.8 percent for 2004 or much below global norms. If these items were 5 percent of global trade or lower, it would be "quite safe" based on international standards.

6 foreign firms keen on Toledo copper project revival

By Christine A. Gaylican

ATLAS Consolidated Mining and Development Corp. is holding talks with six foreign mining companies for possible investments in a copper project in Toledo City, Cebu.

The Toledo copper mining project stopped operations 10 years ago and Atlas is hoping to revive it within the year, company president Alfredo Ramos said.

This, however, would largely depend on the outcome of the negotiations with the six foreign mining firms.

Ramos said three of these companies were Chinese, two were Korean, and one was Japanese.

Negotiations, Ramos said, were still in the preliminary stage, but all six mining companies wanted to acquire Atlas Mining shares or forge supply contracts.

He said Atlas would initially need about $171 million to restart the Cebu copper project. This amount would cover the $50 million needed to construct a 55-megawatt power plant. It will be used also for the rehabilitation of Atlas' underground mine.

Atlas' copper project in Cebu, covering about 5,000 hectares, was started in 1955 but it was shut down in 1994 when copper prices in the world market dropped.

The Toledo facility is capable of producing 42,000 metric tons of copper daily. The mine is said to have mineral resources reaching 873 million tons with a grade of 0.41 percent copper. Between the 1970s and the 1980s, the Atlas copper project employed 14,000 workers.

UnionBank Q1 profit up 58%

UNION Bank of the Philippines posted a net income of P790 million in the first quarter, or 58 percent better than a year ago, on rising profits from asset recovery and its consumer finance, cash management services and capital markets businesses.

The amount was net of the P90 million set aside for loan loss provisioning.

The bank, in a statement, said revenue was up by 30.8 percent to P1.6 billion.

"UnionBank again registered one of the highest profitability ratios among Philippine banks," the bank said.

The bank achieved a return on average equity of 19 percent and return on average assets of 3.2 percent in the first quarter of the year.

Total assets expanded by 31.2 percent to P97.4 billion in March 2005 from P74.2 billion in the same period last year.

The increase in assets was propelled by the 23-percent growth in deposits to P55.3 billion, which was attributed to the bank's aggressive marketing strategy and innovative products and services.

Its capital base grew by 10.4 percent to P17 billion while its credit risk-adjusted capital adequacy ratio stood at 43.9 percent, remaining way above the capitalization requirement of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

In the 2005 AsiaMoney FX (foreign exchange) poll for the Philippines, UnionBank was voted No. 2 Best Local Bank in FX Services. In the cash management poll, the bank was cited among the most preferred local cash management banks and one of the most innovative banks when it comes to cash management solutions. *Doris C. Dumlao*

DTI: Napocor ...

From page B6

Systems loss is the percentage of the total cost of electricity that a utility bought from generating companies, but which it lost due to the resistance of distribution wires and through pilferage.

The law allows a utility to pass on to its customers up to 9.5 percent of the systems loss. This means the distributor will have to absorb financial losses if systems losses go higher.

The public distribution system (PDS) in the Subic freeport used to sustain an average systems loss of 15 percent before SEZC took over in October 2003. The company took over the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority-run PDS after besting competitors in a public bidding for the contract to operate and manage the utility for 25 years.

In a statement, SEZC said it managed to bring down systems losses after it implemented a metering rehabilitation program. The program entailed checking and correcting all the kWh meters used by all its customers.

Company officials said that while the utility would no longer absorb losses, customers benefit directly in terms of reduced monthly bills. SEZC expects the systems loss of Subic's PDS to decrease further as the firm continued to implement projects that would improve operating efficiency, they said.

SEZC is a joint venture among Davao Light & Power Co., Aboitiz Equity Ventures and Mirant Philippines.

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Oil holds below $50 as US supplies swell

NEW YORK—Oil prices held below $50 a barrel on Monday, keeping a streak of recent losses as higher Opec production and swelling crude stocks in the United States weighed on the market.

US light crude firmed eight cents to $49.80 a barrel after dropping as low as $49.03 a barrel, the lowest since Feb.22 and almost 16 percent below the record $58.28 struck on April 4.

"It's a split market for the time being. Short term it's definitely weak if you look at stocks and Opec production," said Tony Nunan at Mitsubishi Corp. in Tokyo.

"But medium term, three to six months out, it looks like supply could be really tight." Prices came under selling pressure last week as US crude stocks jumped by a surprising 5.5 million barrels as imports into the world's biggest consumer surged to almost 10.9 million barrels per day (bpd), the third-highest weekly volume on record.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries has pledged to increase supplies to cool prices down to below $50 a barrel, which has helped to build US crude stockpiles to the highest level since mid-2002.

The cartel has an official production ceiling of 27.5 million barrels per day (bpd), excluding Iraq.

Including Iraqi production, Opec's current output would beat levels of over 30 million bpd pumped late last year that took Opec supply to 25-year highs.

Sheikh Ahmad had said the cartel would add 500,000 bpd of fresh supplies to world oil markets starting from May. But he said that "by numbers, we already have more than 500,000 of real production in the market."

Opec, which controls half the world's crude exports, meets again on June 15 in Vienna to chart production strategy for the second half of the year.

Most of the 10 Opec members with quotas—Iraq is excluded—are now producing at full tilt as the exporter group seeks to encourage stockbuilding in the coming months to create a buffer for strong demand later this year.

Some analysts worry that high commodity prices are starting to dent world economic growth by fueling inflation and prompting a rising trend in global interest rates.

"We continue to think that the high oil price hurts the economy," Claude Mandil, the head of the International Energy Agency told reporters on the sidelines of the group's biannual ministerial meeting.

The US economy grew at its slowest pace in two years during the first quarter—an annual rate of 3.1 percent—fanning concerns of a possible slowdown in oil demand growth. *Reuters*

US Fed seen raising rates

WASHINGTON—Federal Reserve policymakers have signaled their intention to raise US interest rates for the eighth time in as many meetings, but their future course is more difficult to predict, analysts said.

The Federal Open Market Committee, the US central bank's policymaking arm, meets under the chairmanship of Alan Greenspan on Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila) with analysts betting it will lift rates by 25 basis points to 3 percent.

The action would be the eighth consecutive quarter-point increase, in line with the Fed's stated policy of "measured" or gradual rate actions.

The move is seen as an effort to bring rates back to a more normal or neutral range after a long period of stimulative moves, and to snuff out building inflationary pressures.

But with growing evidence of a slowdown in the world's largest economy, the Fed's future course of action is less clear, and financial markets will scrutinize the FOMC statement for signs of how the bank will respond to the shifting economic landscape.

Citibank economist Christopher Wiegand said the Fed is taking the appropriate action to keep the economy growing without fanning inflation.

"US economic expansion remains well supported and is consistent with modestly higher interest rates," Wiegand said.

But David Kotok at Cumberland Advisors said the rapid deceleration in economic growth means the Fed may be in a position to stop boosting rates sooner instead of later.

"The US economy is in a 'soft patch.' That is now clearly established with the last round of data releases," Kotok said.

"Greenspan is not going to end his career with a recession that he caused by taking the Fed Funds rate up, too far, too fast. That means he will stop raising rates too soon, rather than too late."

Kotok said he has scrapped his federal funds target rate from 4.5 percent by year-end, and predicts the Fed will await to see the duration of the soft patch.

Under a weak scenario, he said, the Fed may stop at 3 percent and even cut rates later this year.

Deutsche Bank economist Peter Hooper acknowledged the soft patch, but argues this will be short-lived, allowing the Fed to stay its course.

"We still think the softness is transitory and that growth will pick up again in the second quarter as capital spending regains a little momentum, consumer spending continues to hold its own, and a drop in inventory accumulation is offset by some bounceback in net exports," he said.

Analysts say that the Fed is now grappling with its signal to the markets, specifically the use of the word "measured," signaling small steps in rates, and "accommodative," meaning rates are still an economic stimulus and may need to go higher before getting back to neutral.

Hooper said the Fed wants to send a clear message on inflation-fighting and may shift the language to provide more flexibility. *AFP*

JUNICHIRO Koizumi Prime
in Luxembourg. The exchan
adopted in 2001. Cooperati
center of the discussions.

New ADB president to focus on economic integr

ASIAN Development Bank (ADB) president Haruhiko Kuroda. VAL HANDUMON

ISTANBUL—Economic integration among Asian countries will be one of the key priorities of the Asian Development Bank in order to speed up economic growth in the region, the ADB's new president Haruhiko Kuroda said Monday.

Kuroda, who will make his first speech to the ADB board as president on Wednesday, said "economic integration is a key strategic element of economic development of the region."

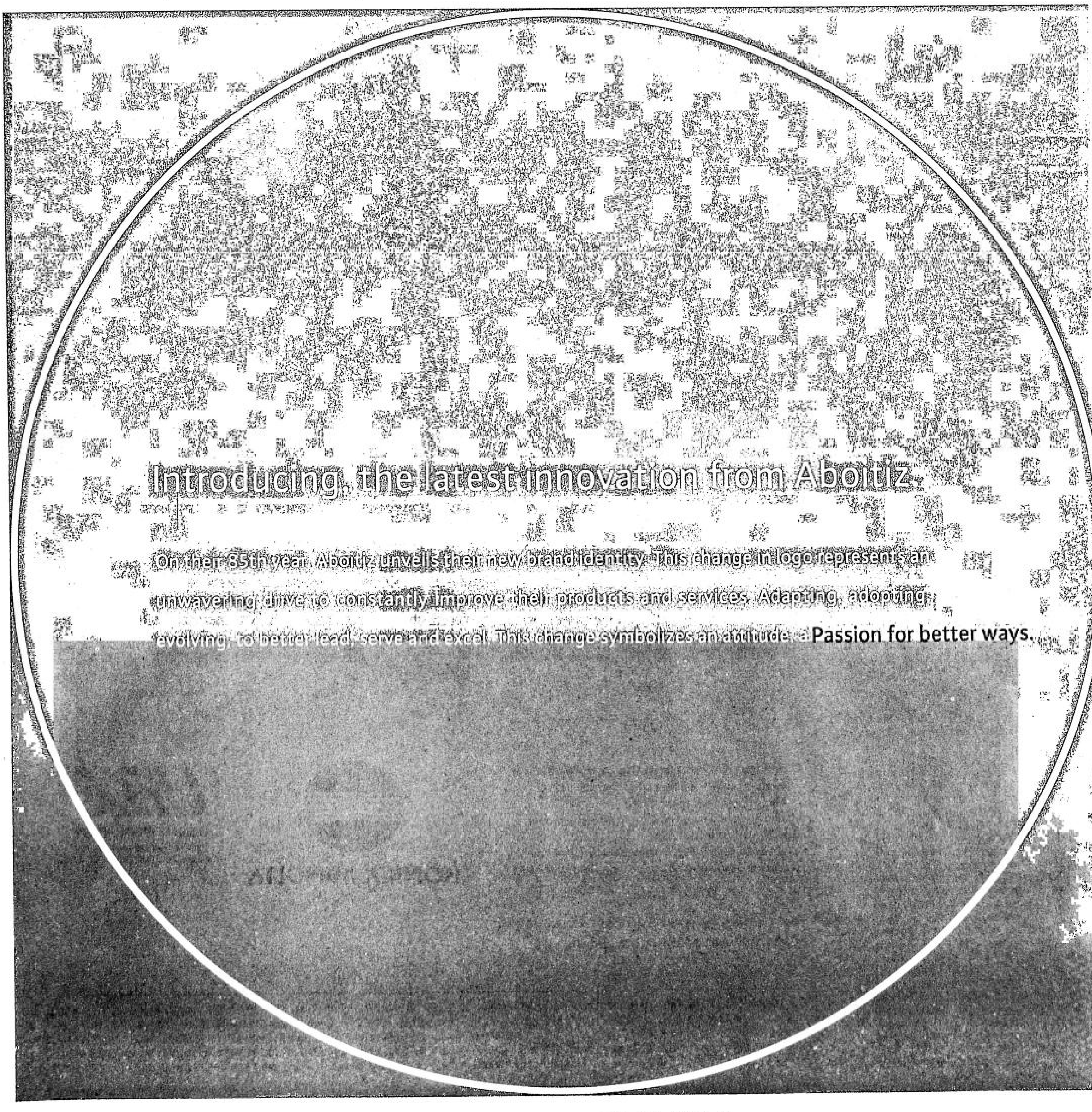
"I would like very much to focus on regional economic integration," said Kuroda who took office at the multilateral institution in February.

He cited ADB's efforts to foster the development of the Greater Mekong Subregion, a growth area encompassing six countries, as well as ADB's role in encouraging closer financial cooperation between the so-called "Asean-plus-3," referring to the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and its main trading partners: China, Japan and South Korea.

Kuroda said South Asia and Central Asia were two areas that showed promise for regional integration and that South Asia could become an area similar to
Asean-plus-3 region.

Drawing attention to the g
ing number of free-trade a
ments in Asia, he said: "FTA
works will help economie
more interdependent" while
ing them to grow faster.

The ADB annual conferen
be held on Wednesday thr
Friday in Istanbul, Turkey's f
cial capital, will bring tog
some 3,000 delegates from
60 ADB member countries, w
meeting of the Asean-plus-
nance ministers on the sidelin



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minister of Japan, gives a press conference after the 14th EU-Japan summit, ge of views focused on the different aspects of the EU-Japan action plan on in areas of the economy, finance, trade and science will therefore be at the

AFP

ation to speed up growth

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However, Kuroda stressed that poverty reduction would still be the ADB's main objective as poverty continued to plague Asia despite rapid economic growth in the region.

He conceded that much of the ADB's lending in the coming years would still go to China and India, adding that "a lot of poor people still live in these two countries" despite their growing economies.

China and India received 25 percent each of total ADB lending last year, he said, but stressed they only got loans from the ADB's ordinary capital resources and refrained from borrowing from the Asian Development Fund (ADF), the bank's concessional lending window.

The ADB president said that the benefits of Asia's economic resurgence had been lopsided with some countries or sectors being left behind.

"Growth is necessary but growth is not sufficient to eradicate poverty," he said.

Kuroda said countries that suffered civil strife lagged in economic growth and stressed that the ADB was trying to help these "post-conflict" nations by strengthening their civil institutions. *AFP*

MIXED RESULTS

Asian stocks up slightly, await Fed meet

SINGAPORE—Asian stock markets were mixed on Tuesday, supported by gains in US stocks but cautious ahead of a US central bank rate-setting meeting, while expectations of a Chinese revaluation supported the yen.

Financial bookmakers predicted a firm start for markets in Europe, with London traders returning from holiday to bid the FTSE up by 35 points. The DAX was expected to gain 14 points and France's CAC-40 13 points.

Tokyo markets are closed through Thursday for Japan's "Golden Week" holidays, but offshore traders bought the yen against the euro in thin conditions.

By 1 p.m., the yen was at 135 per euro, compared with 135.12 in late New York trading on Monday and within half a yen of 10-week lows.

The yen and the euro were little changed against the dollar ahead of the US Federal Reserve's interest rate-setting meeting later on Tuesday, where the central bank is widely expected to raise its key rate by 25 basis points to 3 percent—its eighth straight hike.

Many investors perceive other currencies in Asia, which relies heavily on exports to the United States, as being undervalued and ripe for a rise if China revalues the yuan.

Asian share markets shook off Monday's recovery in oil, but shed early gains.

MSCI's index of non-Japan Asian share markets fell 0.4 percent. Singapore's Straits Times Index led gainers with a rise of 0.74 percent by midday.

"I think some confidence is returning to the market that, if the price of oil and interest rates remain within expectations, there is room for some earnings upgrades," said Yang Sy Jian, head of research at brokers UOB Kay Hian.

Australia's S&P ASX 200 sank 0.62 percent, led by falls in BHP Billiton, off 1.6 percent, and AMP Ltd., which slipped 1.9 percent.

Hong Kong stocks edged higher, led by a 1.7 percent gain in market heavyweight China Mobile Seoul shares edged down half a percent in a bout of late selling of banks as investors grew cautious of US monetary policy ahead of the central bank meeting.

A more aggressive tightening policy by the Fed could hurt Asian exporters such as South Korea's Hyundai Motor Co. and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (TSMC). Hyundai was off 1.5 percent, while TSMC gained 0.8 percent. The broader Taiwan market was unchanged. *Reuters*

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PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project;

INSULATION and CLADDING WORKS for the SOUTHERN NEGROS GEOTHERMAL PRODUCTION FIELD (SNGPF) REINJECTION LINES
EDC-05-056

The Approved Budget is PhP 7,086,954.65 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is one hundred thirty five (135) calendar days.

Application forms for Eligibility may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o M.C. Banla starting **May 2, 2005** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: **Four Hundred (PhP 400.00).**

Application for Eligibility and Letter of Intent must be submitted to the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group not later than **3:00 p.m. of May 16, 2005.**

Bid documents will be available for issuance to eligible bidders starting **June 3, 2005** upon payment of the non-refundable fee of Pesos: One Thousand (PhP 1,000.00).

Site inspection is on **June 21, 2005**. For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **June 23, 2005, 10:00 a.m.** at the BAC Conference Room, First Floor, Building V, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

Sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group, First Floor, Building V, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City **not later than 2:00 p.m. (Contracts Administration Group Office Wall Clock Time)** of **July 6, 2005** and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

BAC Chairman

(PDI – May 4, 2005)

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PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Philippines MCPO Box 2102 Tel. No. 893-6001/1320

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2005-2007 TUBULAR INSPECTION SERVICES CONTRACT FOR PNOC-EDC DRILLING PROJECTS
EDC05-026

The Approved Budget is P28,285,950.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 730 calendar days.

Application Forms for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o F.T. Tolibas) starting **May 4, 2005** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: One Thousand (P1,000.00)

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **May 12, 2005, 10:30 A.M.** at the Pre-Bid Room, 1st Flr., Bldg. 5, PNOC-EDC, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig.

Applications for Eligibility and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at PNOC-EDC, 1st floor, Bldg. 5, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila, **not later than 2:00 p.m. on May 23, 2005** and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to abort the bidding process, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose is bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

BAC Chairman

(PDI – May 4, 2005)

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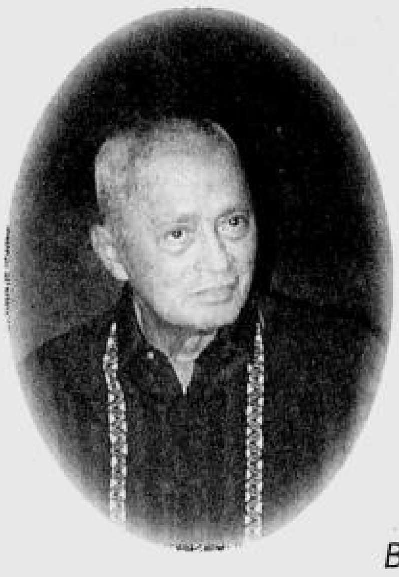

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In loving memory of Nene, who passed away last Sunday , May 1, 2005. There will always be a special place in our hearts for you.
Remembrance and prayers always...

"People whose lives you have touched will always keep fond memories of you - special moments of love and laughter, of sorrows and tears, of blessings and celebrations, all of which we will cherish in thought and always in our hearts, today and for all eternity."

Bereaved Mother, **Dolores**
Bereaved Wife, **Esther**

Children, In-laws & Grandchildren:
Casimiro " Junjun" Madarang III & Linell • Kashim, Kevin, Keith
Dr. Carolina " Carol " Falcis & Nicky • Charlene, Nikko, Alain
Consuelo " Connie " Madarang
Casimiro " Yoyoy" Madarang IV & Marivic • Carla, Ivan, Rhonnie
Dolores " Dodi" Madarang & Francis • Chessa, Shasha, Bambam
Jean Margaret " Margot" Crabtree & Dave

His body now lies at the family residence in Madarang Hill, Nivel, Lahug, Cebu City. Daily mass held nightly. Schedule for Cremation will be on Sunday, May 8, 2005.

Vicente N. Aguilar

Husband, Father, Friend

Has peacefully joined our Creator on April 29, 2005
at the age of 85.

Together with our beloved mother, the former Ester Aguino, we, the children, Manny/Lito and Yollie Catipon, Vicente Jr. and Prima Vera, Carmencita and Nelson Dimla (†), Carolina and Uwe Hesse, Cynthia and Roberto Yatco (†), Oscar and Divina Policarpio, Carina and Clarence Agarao (†), Raul Victor and Catharin Ang, and Joji; grandchildren and great grandchildren, brothers and sister request our friends and relatives to pray for the eternal peace and repose of the soul of our father whom we will miss so much.

Funeral Mass and interment will be on Saturday, May 7, 2005 at 3:00 p.m. at the St. James the Great Parish, lower chapel, Cuenca St., Ayala Alabang, Muntinlupa City.

If you walk with God today,
You can be confident about tomorrow.

"Even when I walk
through a dark valley, I feel no
harm. For you are at my side,
your rod and staff
give me courage..."
Psalm 23:4

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The Family and Relatives of the late

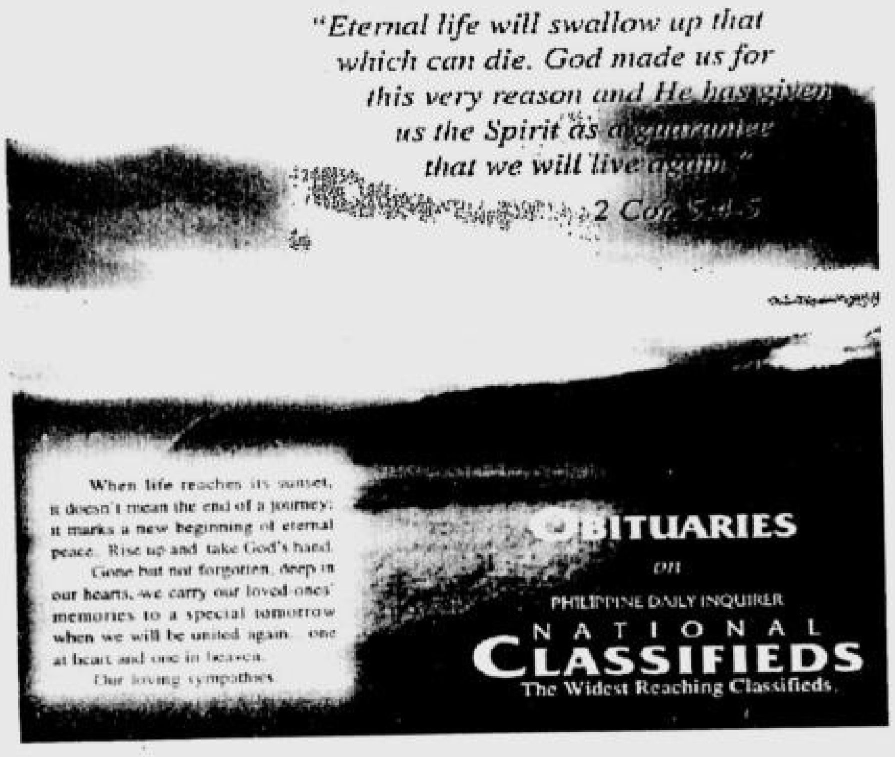
EUFRACIA DE BORJA LIMACO

1915 – 2005

Widow of the late **Rogelio Limaco** of Biñan Laguna; her sons **Miguelito, Rogelio** and **Isidro** and their spouses **Alice Angala, Corazon Javinez, Carmelita Fernandez** respectively; her grandchildren and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at **Mount Carmel Shrine Parish, St. Joseph Chapel**, Doña Juana Rodriguez Ave., Broadway, New Manila, Quezon City.

Interment will be on **Thursday, May 5, 2005** after the **3:00 p.m. Holy Mass** at Mount Carmel, St. Joseph Chapel.



"Eternal life will swallow up that which can die. God made us for this very reason and He has given us the Spirit as a guarantee that we will live again."
2 Cor. 5:4-5

When life reaches its sunset, it doesn't mean the end of a journey; it marks a new beginning of eternal peace. Rise up and take God's hand.
Gone but not forgotten, deep in our hearts, we carry our loved ones' memories to a special tomorrow when we will be united again – one at heart and one in heaven.
Our loving sympathies.

OBITUARIES on PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER NATIONAL CLASSIFIEDS
The Widest Reaching Classifieds.

"I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith."
2 Timothy 4:7

DR. VIRGILIO A. IGNACIO

(September 20, 1917 – May 2, 2005)

Peacefully joined his Creator on May 2, 2005 at the age of 87.

His beloved wife, **Felicidad Coronel Ignacio (†)**

Children :	**Josefina "Josie" & Alberto Mallari** **Virgilio Jr. "Boy" & Estelita Ignacio** **Lorna Ignacio** **Edna & Manuel Sta. Cruz** **Dra. Vifel & Dr. Marius Garcia** **Vic Rossano & Teresita Ignacio** **Joy and John Yip**
Grandchildren :	**Aimee & Ramir, Vincent** **Glenn & Emmylou, Carlo** **Andrea, Katrina, Pamela, Carla, Noel** **Camille, Garet** **Erika, Nina, Gabriel, Cecilia** **Calista**
Brothers & Sisters :	**Purificacion (†)** **Noli** **Aristide (†)** **Vladimir (†)**

Relatives and friends request everyone to join in praying for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at **La Salle Greenhills Chapel**, Ortigas Avenue, Mandaluyong City. Interment will be on Saturday, May 7, 2005 at **Manila Memorial Park**, Sucat, Parañaque after the 8:00 a.m. mass.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the following charities will be accepted: Don Bosco, Child Hope and Resources for the Blind.

PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Philippines MCPO Box 2102 Tel. No. 893-6001/1320

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project:

2005-2007 DIRECTIONAL DRILLING SERVICES CONTRACT FOR PNOC-EDC GEOTHERMAL PROJECTS
EDC05-023

The Approved Budget is $6,530,856.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 24 months.

Application Forms for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o R.A. Sison) starting **May 4, 2005** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: One Thousand (P1,000.00).

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **May 18, 2005, 2:30 P.M.** at the 1st Flr. Conference Room of PNOC-EDC's Building V.

Applications for Eligibility and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at PNOC-EDC, 1st Floor, Bldg. 5, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila, **not later than 2:00 p.m.** on **May 31, 2005** and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to abort the bidding process, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

BAC Chairman

(PDI–May 4, 2005)

PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Philippines MCPO Box 2102 Tel. No. 893-6001/1320

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project:

2005-2007 TUBULAR HARDBANDING AND SOFTBANDING SERVICES CONTRACT FOR PNOC-EDC DRILLING PROJECTS
EDC05-025

The Approved Budget is PhP19,548,441.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 730 calendar days.

Application Forms for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o F.T. Tolibas) starting **May 4, 2005** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: One Thousand (₱1,000.00).

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **May 12, 2005, 02:00 P.**[illegible] Pre-Bid Room, 1st Flr., Bldg. 5, PNOC-EDC, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig.

Applications for Eligibility and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at PNOC-EDC, 1st Floor, Bldg. 5, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila, **not later than 2:00 p.m.** on **May 23, 2005** and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to abort the bidding process, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

BAC Chairman

(PDI–May 4, 2005)

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April 27, 2005

NOTICE OF PUBLIC AUCTION

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 2601 to 2610 of the TCCP, as amended, in relation to CMO 5-2003 dated March 17, 2003, and CMO 18-2003 dated 25 July 2003, there will be a Public Auction Sale to be conducted by this Port on **May 17, 2005, at 2:30 P.M.** to be held at the 2nd Floor, MICP Building, North Harbor, Isla Puting Bato, Tondo, Manila, the herein described articles in lot. Said articles shall be available for viewing on **May 16, 2005**. In the event of a failed bidding, the second auction shall be conducted on the third business day following the first bidding.

Lot No. 037-04 VARIOUS CONSIGNEES R.A. 7651 1st Advertisment 'As Is Where Is' Floor Price: Php6,731,000.00	One (1) - One Hundred Forty (140) Units Righ Hand Drive (RHD) and Three (3) Units Left Hand Drive Motor Vehicles - cars, pick-ups, minicabs, light and medium trucks, compactors, minibus w/out engine, old model jeeps, vans and forklift - mostly dilapidated, junk condition, cannibalized, sawed and rusty. AND One (1) lot 5,500 kgs. (approximate) assorted junk auto/parts/accessories, light truck cabins and chassis. Note: Subject to weighing before release. Requirements: 1. Only bidders with LTO/DTI Accredited Conversion Facilities will be allowed to participate in the bidding. 2. The above Right Hand Drive (RHD) Motor Vehicles will be transferred underguard directly from the Customs zone to the said facility for conversion to Left Hand Drive (LHD). 3. The Certificate of Payment for the above (RHD) motor vehicles will be issued only upon their conversion to LHD and will be certified to be roadworthy by the winning bidder/LTO/DTI Accredited Conversion Facility and the Customs Guard assigned thereat. Location: ICTSI Car Stalag

Basic Guidelines:

1. File the duly accomplished Registration Form (name, address, TIN and other relevant circumstances to be indicated).
2. Php2,000.00 Registration Fee (Non-Refundable).
3. Php100,000.00 Cash Bond (Refundable).
4. The highest bidder shall be required to pay 50% of the bid price either in cash and/or Manager's Check immediately and the balance of 50% shall be paid within the next business day.
5. After the second failed bidding, a particular lot may be offered to all qualified bidders for negotiated sale, subject to compliance of the requirements under Section IV-J of CMO 5-2003.
6. Payment by Cashier's/Manager's Checks to the BOC/MICP shall bear the following:
   a. Pay to the order of Land Bank of the Philippines - BOC MICP E.O.
   b. For credit of the Bureau of Customs.
   c. For the account of:

Bidder

For further details, please contact Mr. Isidro A. Pre, Chief, Auction & Cargo Disposal Division, MICP, Tel. No. 247-09-77.

(Sgd.) **Atty. FELIPE A. BARTOLOME, CESO V**
District Collector of Customs

(PDI – May 4, 2005)

PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Philippines MCPO Box 2102 Tel. No. 893-6001/1320

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project:

BALANCE INSULATION AND CLADDING WORKS FOR LEYTE GEOTHERMAL PRODUCTION FIELD (LGPF) STEAMLINE INTERCONNECTION PROJECT (STAGE 3) AND VARIOUS REFURBISHMENT AND REPAIR WORKS
EDC 05-054

The Approved Budget is PhP9,609,108.14 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is one hundred fifty (150) calendar days.

Application forms for Eligibility may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o M.C. Banle) starting April 25, 2005 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: Four Hundred (PhP400.00).

Application for Eligibility and Letter of Intent must be submitted to the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group not later than 3:00 p.m. of May 11, 2005.

Bid documents will be available for issuance to eligible bidders starting May 30, 2005 upon payment of the non-refundable fee of Pesos. One Thousand (PhP1,000.00).

Site inspection is on June 14, 2005. For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on June 16, 2005, 10:00 a.m. at the BAC Conference Room, First Floor, Building V, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

Sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group, First Floor, Building V, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City not later than 2:00 p.m. (Contracts Administration Group Office Wall Clock Time) of June 28, 2005 and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

BAC Chairman

(PDI–May 4, 2005)

PASEGURUHAN NG MGA NAGLILINGKOD SA PAMAHALAAN
(Government Service Insurance System)
Laguna Branch Office
Brgy. Biñan, Pagsanjan, Laguna 4009

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Republic of the Philippines
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT (JANITORIAL AND SECURITY SERVICES) FOR GSIS LAGUNA FIELD OFFICE BUILDING PAGSANJAN, LAGUNA

1. The Government Service Insurance System, through the approved Corporate Budget (Assets & Facilities Maintenance – GSIS Laguna Field Office) for CY 2005, intends to apply the sum of TWO MILLION SIX HUNDRED SEVENTY ONE THOUSAND PESOS ONLY (P2,671,000.00), being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for ONE LOT PROPERTY MANAGEMENT (JANITORIAL AND SECURITY SERVICES) FOR GSIS LAGUNA FIELD OFFICE BUILDING, PAGSANJAN, LAGUNA. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening.
2. The Government Service Insurance Systems now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for ONE LOT PROPERTY MANAGEMENT (JANITORIAL AND SECURITY SERVICES) FOR GSIS LAGUNA FIELD OFFICE BUILDING, PAGSANJAN, LAGUNA. Delivery of the Property Management Services is required from September 1, 2005 to August 31, 2006. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, Instructions to Bidders (ITB).
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted to organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified in Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the lowest calculated bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine his responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) Laguna Field Office, and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of P1,000.00. The method of payment will be CASH. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. The GSIS Laguna Field Office will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on June 3, 2005, 1:00 pm at the Multi-Purpose Hall, 3rd level, GSIS Laguna Field Office Building, Biñan, Pagsanjan, Laguna.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before June 15, 2005, 1:00 pm. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in any of the following forms:

FORM OF BIDS SECURITY	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to Bid
Cash, Certified Check, Cashier's Check, Manager's Check, Bank Draft or Irrevocable Letter of Credit	One Percent (1%)
Bank Guarantee	One and a half Percent (1 1/2%)
Surety Bond	Two and a half Percent (2 1/2%)
Foreign Government Guarantee	One Hundred Percent (100%)

and in the amount at least equal to, and not lower than, a percentage of the Approved Budget for the Contract to be bid, or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late bids shall not be accepted.

8. Bid opening shall be on June 15, 2005, 1:30 pm at the Multi-Purpose Hall, 3rd Level, GSIS Laguna Field Office Building, Biñan, Pagsanjan, Laguna.. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.
9. The GSIS reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Nellie S. Camo, CESO V
Field Operations Manager
Name of Officer

GSIS Laguna Field Office
Name of Office

Brgy. Biñan, Pagsanjan, Laguna
Postal/Street Address

049-8086960 & 049-8086055
Telefax Number

(Sgd.) NELLIE S. CAMO, CESO V
Field Operations Manager
BAC Chairman

(PDI – April 27 & May 4, 2005)

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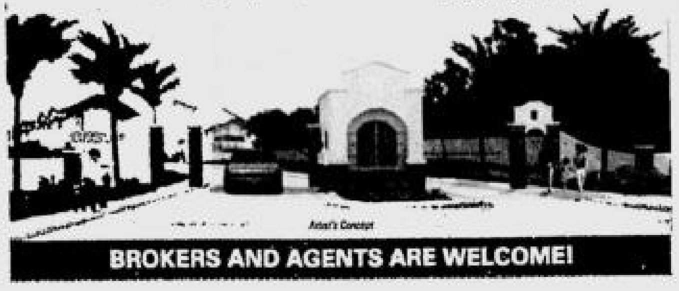

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of Rovin G. Asperilla who died on Aug. 26, 2000 has been extrajudicially settled by his heirs before Notary Public Hobart T. Cocadiz as per Doc. No. 110 Page No. 23; Book No. 05 Series of 2005 (PDI- April 20, 27 & May 4, 2005)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the spouses Ricardo Morales and Erlinda Mateo consisting of a parcel of land, (TCT No RT-5414-Bulacan) was extrajudicially settled by their heirs as per Doc. No 462, Page No 94, Book No. 121, Series of 2003 of the Notarial Register of Antonio R. Romulo of Bulacan (PDI-April 27, May 4, 11, 2005)

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ERROL MERQUITA

Improving the health of the rural poor

By Candy G. Villanueva
Contributor

ALL ABOUT WORK

THE ROAD to Compostela Valley is long, muddy and uneven to say the least, but Errol Merquita patiently takes the skylab, a single motor vehicle with wings, almost everyday this summer to implement the malaria control program in the rural town of Davao. Unknown to most of us who are sheltered in air-conditioned quarters, malaria is one of the leading causes of death for the poor. But Merquita knows this well. He and a dedicated team under the World Health Organization (WHO) know this well.

Errol Merquita is an information, education and communication (IEC) officer who handles the Accelerating Response to Malaria in the Philippines Rural Poor program funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria under the WHO in Davao. Every day, Merquita and several other IEC officers like him brave rough roads, NPA-military encounters and even the occasional *pangayaws*, or tribal wars, to save our neglected brethren from the deadly bite of an infected female mosquito.

Management teams

The WHO reports that about 500 million cases of malaria occur every year and more than one million of those infected die. "Malaria is the eighth leading cause of morbidity and mortality in the Philippines where the disease affects the poor and underserved especially the indigenous people," adds Merquita. A worldwide eradication program was started in the 1950s, but it failed to reach the rural areas of the Philippines. Since then, there have been no significant improvements in the malaria control program. But the situation is not totally hopeless. Thanks to Merquita and the handful who have been working tirelessly to stamp out the life-threatening disease.

Across the country, 11 project management teams (PMT) were created last year to implement the malaria control program. The program aims to reduce morbidity by 70 percent and mortality by 50 percent caused by malaria in the 25 affected provinces in the country. Hoping to achieve this within five years, the PMT provides knowledgeable personnel and logistics for detection, treatment and prevention.

Each PMT is composed of project coordinating officers, IEC officers, bookkeepers, disbursing officers and community development organizers. The team basically facilitates training for doctors, medical technologists, microscopists and barangay health workers in malaria management. With the help of the team, microscopes, drugs, laboratory supplies, and mosquito nets are disseminated to the farthest reaches of the country from barangays to *puroks* and even to *sitios* in very remote areas like the Compostela Valley, two hours away from Davao Del Norte.

Health promotion

As the assistant project coordinating officer of the project, Merquita ensures the implementation of the health promotion plan under the malaria control program. "My prime responsibility is networking, lobbying, and advocacy works. We want our LGU (local government unit)' partners to allocate funding support for malaria in the next coming years. We want them to create committees from the provincial to the barangay level to oversee the implementation of the malaria control program."

MERQUITA in the middle (standing) with Ata-Manobos after building a malaria microscopy center bayanihan style.
CANDY G. VILLANUEVA/CONTRIBUTOR

Merquita deals with mayors, vice mayors, Sangguniang Kabataan councilors, and barangay captains, down to the *purok* leaders and tribal leaders regarding sustainable malaria control program. "It's like marketing and bargaining for the benefits of the poor and the underserved. The PMT delivers and facilitates different training and commodities provided that they will sustain it in the next years to come," explains the IEC officer.

A graduate of UP Mindanao with a social science degree, Merquita owes his experience in advocacy and campaigns from growing up in a rural area in Los Amigos Davao and from serving as Sangguniang Kabataan councilor. He says the closest course to take for such an endeavor would be Development Communication.

He adds that anyone interested in working with different people would enjoy his vocation. "What is difficult in this job is the capacity to learn to listen, to be humble and to be a fighter at the same time," says Merquita.

Cultural sensitivity

Aside from the skill of persuasion, the job requires a lot of sensitivity, patience and even a little bit of creativity. To educate the indigenous people, like the Ata-Manobo, and Dibabaon, Merquita designs information materials like leaflets, flipcharts, photo exhibits and modules. There are a lot of clinical and medical terms involved in malaria management, and it is the IEC officer's responsibility to make these terms understandable. It is important that these materials are not only informative and easy to understand, but they also need to be culturally sensitive and appropriate.

The responsibility entails an in-depth understanding of the indigenous people's culture and beliefs. Understanding is only the first step. Next, the IEC officer must be able to educate without offending the group's customs and beliefs. Often it is not easy to convince people who are strong on their beliefs and old practices to submit to alien procedures like blood smearing, the use of appropriate drugs or even something as simple as the use of treated bed nets. "We want them to do this without imposing. We want some behavioral changes for improved health and better life without disrupting the interconnection of their customs and beliefs."

Challenges of power

Dealing with people who are strongly rooted to their traditions and beliefs is only a fraction of the challenge. Sometimes the difficulty comes from interacting with people of power. "There are many coordination, protocols and bureaucratic approaches that need to be followed in order for them to support your program," confesses Merquita.

Often, Merquita goes home drained by the challenges and the depressing environments he is constantly exposed to. "But when you return to the community, you begin to realize that you are more blessed. There are so many people in need of service; so many people are deprived of the basic necessities—clothes, food, shelter, and water. I have the abilities, the talent, the means. It is only fitting that I impart these to them. I may not totally improve their lives, but I am happy that I became a part of their lives."

Payoffs of hard work

Merquita adds that one should not get into development work for the financial returns. He claims that the salary he receives cannot compensate for the hard work he puts in. According to him, it is enough that the responsibility doesn't confine him to an eight-to-five day routine. He also relishes the fact that his job affords him a certain amount of creative freedom and independence. According to him, his work encourages him to be unconventional and creative with his strategies.

Then there's the privilege of being able to experience communities with rich cultures untouched by civilization and modernization. "Like writing a poem or a short story, like playing a role in a stage play, development work fulfills my incomplete being. I am always interested with people. I treat their stories and experiences as a representation of many important elements in our society." In the end, he hopes he will not be measured by the sophistication of the information materials he made but "on the human relationship I build with these people and the quality of life they have acquired by listening or participating with me."

(Email feedback to candyvillanueva@pldtdsl.net*)*

How can you listen better?

DEAR WW: Recently I was criticized for not being a good listener. I was shocked. But I do want to learn how to listen better, can you tell me how?

Pardon Me

WORKING WOUNDED

Bob Rosner

Ever heard of " 'Scuse me while I kiss this guy"? It's an entire book full of misheard song lyrics. For example, there is "I'll never leave your pizza burning" (actual Rolling Stones lyric, "I'll never be your beast of burden"). And the Beatles didn't sing, "The girl with colitis goes by" (it was "The girl with kaleidoscope eyes"). Finally, there wasn't "Sweet dreams are made of cheese" from the Eurythmics (there was, however, "sweet dreams are made of this").

It's funny until you realize how multitasking, stress or just not paying attention leads many of us down the same path of misheard information. I've included tips to help you avoid this problem and to listen better. For more, check out Dorothy Leeds' book "The 7 Powers of Questions" (Perigree, 2000).

Do you listen to what they're saying? I admit I'm guilty of putting more energy into fashioning my response than listening to what someone else is saying to me. Ironically, the more you listen to what they say the easier it will be to respond.

Do you listen for their intent? Joe Torre, the manager of the NY Yankees, once observed that he never just looks at what his players say when they're quoted in the newspaper. He tries to sort out why they're saying it. What is their emotional state as they're talking to you? Are they trusting and forthcoming? Or guarded and defensive? Sure the words that they use are important, but they're often only a small part of what is being communicated to you.

Do you listen to learn? The best ideas have a funny way of coming from the most unlikely sources. That's why it's so important to be open to learning from anyone that you talk to. In fact, there is a new trend in organizations called Reverse Mentoring; where executives are mentored by the younger staff at the bottom of the corporate hierarchy. This helps to ground them in the reality of working on the front lines and can be a great reminder of how things really work, or don't, far from the position of power and privilege.

Do you show them that you're listening? Maintaining eye contact, nodding and restating key points are simple ways to show the other person that you're listening. And if you don't think this is important, think about the last time that you talked to someone who was looking around the room like they were scouting for someone better to talk to; did this make you energized to talk to them?

Back to the song lyrics, who can forget, "I look at your and the patient dies" (actual lyric from P.M. Dawn, "I look at you with patient eyes"). Learn how to listen better and the patient won't die and people will actually be more patient with you.

Here are the results from a recent workingwounded.com/ABC-news.com online ballot: Which song title best describes what you hear at work?

—I Hear a Symphony, 28.1 percent

—I Can Hear You Callin', 31.2 percent

—Sounds of Silence, 40.6 percent

(Mr. Rosner, an internationally syndicated columnist, author and speaker, is based in Seattle, Washington, USA. E-mail him at bob@wokingwounded.com.*)*

ILLUSTRATION BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

Ateneo CORD offers programs in organization research

THE ATENEO Center for Organization Research and Development (CORD) is offering three courses for the month of May. The first program entitled Basic Statistics for Organization Research is scheduled on May 9-10. This is a first course in advanced statistics for organization research covering the conceptual foundation of statistical methods and step-by-step procedures for data analysis. The certificate course in Human Resources Planning and Staffing is scheduled on May 16-20. This is a program that can provide participants with skills in HR planning and forecasting, recruitment and selection. Lastly, the Adult Learning Methodologies on May 25-27 is a short course designed to provide participants with concepts and techniques in facilitating adult learning. For more information, contact Ateneo CORD, 2nd floor Höffner Building, Social Development Complex, Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City. Or call (632) 426-5931, 426-6282, 426-6001 loc. 5363, fax (632) 426-6065, e-mail ateneocord@admu.edu.ph or visit www.ateneocord.org for inquiries and reservations.

'I want to express myself fluently in English'

By Tita Datu Puangco

Advice
FOR THE ANXIOUS PERSON AT WORK

GOOD day! I read your article about the person asking for help with his English. I have the same problem with English. But the problem is I have a difficult time expressing myself in English. I want English to come out naturally from my mouth. When asked by an employer, I should be able to answer spontaneously. I love English as much as I love Tagalog. I think maybe I should go to an English language center to improve my English. I wonder if you can give me the name of an English language center. Looking forward to your reply. May God's favor and blessing be upon us.

PD

An article from your column in PDI has interested me for some time now. In your article, you featured a letter from a person who wanted to get into a call center but didn't possess the skills. If my memory serves me right, you mentioned about putting up courses in English. What does your school offer in terms of courses and training?

MZ

To all those wishing to improve their English, I would like to share my company's experiences in this area. After intensive preparation and consultation, we are launching our English Jamming Program in May. It is a fun yet practical and serious course intended for college graduates, professionals and jobseekers who desire to have a good command of English. Developed by an expert in English language teaching, it was further pretested and reviewed by three English critics with different specialties. It is a five-day adult learning experience conducted every Friday.

Program design

Our design team agreed on the basic principles of language. First, that language is used for thinking, for constructing meaning and for communicating. Second, that language is learned through use. Third, that language has to be taken as a whole and always occurs in context. Finally that the language arts of speaking, listening, reading and writing and the cueing subsystems are interactive and mutually supportive.

The team had to agree how to treat errors in language. Our view is that errors are simply miscues. They indicate the learner's current hypothesis of the language. Errors are informative and are a window to the learner's learning process. They influence the manner in which we design the learning experience.

A vital component of the design process was to make clear assumptions around learners. We assume that the learners are aware of their learning needs and are self-motivated. We view the learner's experience as important and that the materials and activities can connect with the learner's background. We make sure that the learner's goals are compatible with the goals of the module. Then in addition, we ensure that the learning environment is conducive and proper for learning. The role of the trainers is to act as facilitators or partners in the learning process.

Gaps in proficiency

The program begins with an assessment of the current level of proficiency of the learner. The first day engages the learner in identifying gaps in proficiency in the four language arts of speaking, listening, reading and writing. The learner then sets his or her own goals, tracks one's progress from entry to exit and plan for continuing self-improvement after the program. It also involves a review of English grammar creating an awareness of most common difficulties and problems.

Then, the facilitators work on the experience of using English. The learner's mindset is significant. This portion of the program is to affirm positive experiences, reverse negative experiences and offer alternatives to overcome emotional blocks to proficiency. This is followed by productive listening, a critical skill especially for call center agents. Exercises enable the learner to identify the gist of a listening experience, distinguish between a minor and major detail and to enhance capability to retell in one's words the material listened to. They identify an individual's difficulties with listening and demonstrate strategies for effective listening.

Speaking with fluency

After listening comes the challenge of speaking with fluency. An outstanding feature is to identify qualities of Philippine language that interfere with communication with foreign nationals. It discusses the cultural implications of English usage for western standard English and Filipino English. Then this discussion is followed by purposive speech exercises: organizing a topic to talk about, identifying a specific audience, demonstrating ways to improve fluency, engaging in spontaneous exchange with peers and gaining confidence in oral expression.

The reading comprehension portion aims at the practice of effective reading strategies, the recognition of the relationship between reading text genre, reading purpose and reading strategy, the reading of nonprose and demonstrate evidence of reading comprehension.

Effective writing

To cap the program is the module on effective writing. It covers demonstrating the writing process, identifying the audience and purpose of a written piece, producing a written work for each identified purpose, critiquing and improving a written piece. The program ends with a final self-assessment to measure progress and set continuous improvement goals.

We are confident that this program will clearly address learners' needs. An added bonus would be practice in developing job resumés and practice in the art of the job interview. Incidentally, Ancilla also offers a western accent program and tutorials. For details, please ask for JP at telephones 8922895 to 96 or 892-2898. Thank you for your queries. God bless.

(Ms Puangco is CEO and chair of Ancilla Enterprise Development Consulting. Send feedback through e-mail to advice@ancillaedc.com.ph *or fax to 892-2902.)*

BUSINESS

Hike in airlines' fuel surcharge OKd

By Clarissa S. Batino

LOCAL carriers were given the go-ahead by the Civil Aeronautics Board to collect an additional fuel surcharge for both foreign and domestic flights starting next week in light of the continuing increases in jet fuel prices.

This will translate to an additional fuel surcharge of as much as P250 for a one-way local flight and up to $8 for a one-way overseas flight.

CAB executive director Tomas Mañalac said the agency approved the petitions of Philippine Airlines and Cebu Air Pacific last week. A similar petition filed by Air Philippines Corp. is expected to be approved within the week.

"The fuel surcharge imposed by the carriers is significantly lower than the actual additional costs brought about by the rising costs of fuel. This is because the local airlines need to remain competitive in both the domestic and international markets," said Mañalac in an interview.

PAL and Cebu Pacific agreed to wait for the approval of Air Philippines' petition before implementing their fare increases. Mañalac said the approval was valid for three to six months, after which the airlines would have to submit again their fuel surcharge computation for the CAB review.

PAL and Cebu Pacific submitted their petition to the CAB in late March while Air Philippines filed its petition last month.

The local carriers cited the increasing price of aviation fuel as the main reason for seeking increases in the fuel surcharge. Jet fuel now costs more than $70 per barrel, up from an average of $55 per barrel when the last fare adjustment was made in November last year.

The CAB allowed PAL to collect an additional $8 fuel surcharge on one-way trips to the United States, Canada and Australia and additional $3 on one-way flights to the Middle East and other destinations.

The flag carrier currently collects a fuel surcharge of $14 on trips to the US, Canada, and Australia; $13 on Middle East and $11 on all other foreign destinations.

Fuel accounts for as much as 40 percent of the airlines' operating costs.

"The last time we asked for a fuel surcharge, the cost of jet fuel was about $55 per barrel. Now it is more than $70 per barrel," said Cebu Pacific general manager Danilo Mojica.

He said local carriers had to keep a balance between cost recovery and the passengers' paying capacity. Cebu Pacific, according to Mojica, did not ask for additional surcharge for its foreign trips.

The airlines were also allowed to impose P1 additional surcharge for every P100-worth of cargo.

When the airlines started collecting fuel surcharge on local trips in November, the prices of tickets went up by about 8 percent in Luzon, nearly 10 percent for Luzon to Visayas flights and 10.5 percent for Luzon to Mindanao flights.

Unlike a fare hike, the fuel surcharge could be removed or reduced, and deducted from the ticket price when prices of aviation turbo go down.

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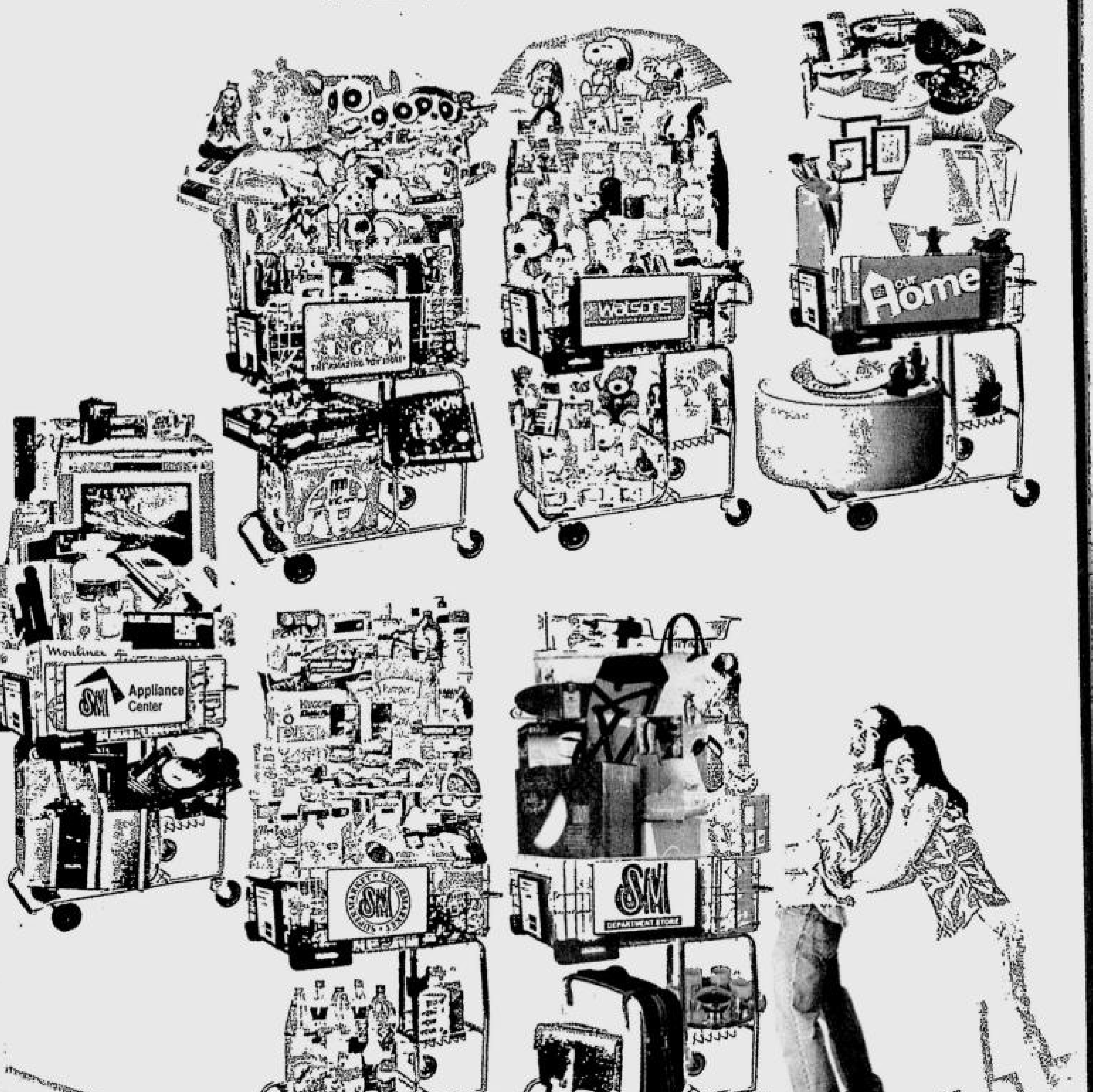

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₱2.5-B sale of bay property to cut Belle Corp. debt

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

LEISURE HOMES developer Belle Corp. may earn roughly P2.5 to P3 billion from the sale of its seven-hectare reclaimed property in Manila Bay—a move that is expected to trim its P2.7-billion debt.

Willy Ocier, Belle vice-chair, said that the proceeds from the possible sale will be used to activate retirement, wellness and medical facilities in its Highlands development in Tagaytay, as well as for the new phases of the group's Saratoga Hills and Plantation Hills projects also in Tagaytay.

The money will also partially fund a second 18-hole golf course in Tagaytay Midlands Golf.

Ocier said the Belle Group is in talks with Japanese investors for its wellness and retirement facilities.

The company's board of directors has approved the sale of the property located along Roxas Boulevard in Parañaque near the Baclaran Church.

The sale is in line with the company's thrust to get rid of non-core assets and focus on residential, leisure development, tourism, retirement and wellness center projects.

Belle Bay City Corp. (BBCC), a 44-percent owned subsidiary of Belle, used to be part of a consortium that owned 19 hectares of reclaimed land along Roxas Boulevard. The property, supposed to be named Belle Bay City, was earmarked as a mixed-use complex that would have included hotel-casino.

Due to the weakness in the economy, shareholders decided to dissolve BBCC and subdivide the property among them. Belle received seven hectares.

"The property, which has commercial potentials, is considered a non-core asset, as Belle aims to focus on its core development in Tagaytay Highlands as well as retirement and wellness centers in non-urban areas," Ocier said. "Belle aims to take advantage of renewed investors confidence to improve its financial condition."

Ocier said the company hopes to complete the sale this year since the property market is showing signs of recovery.

According to Ocier, Belle has managed to trim its debt from P10 billion in 1997 to P2.7 billion to date.

Ilocos holds business summit

OWNERS of small businesses are set to trek up north for a three-day investor's convention which starts on May 6.

The "Northern Summit 2005" is a unique opportunity for businessmen to learn more about the numerous investment opportunities available in Ilocos Norte.

Representatives from the government and local business sector will be on hand during the conference to answer questions about doing business in the province.

"We have been getting a lot of support from the Chinese government and so we want to make it easy for investors to come in," says Ilocos Norte Gov. Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr.

"There are so many business opportunities up north and we need all the help we can get," he added.

Because of its proximity to mainland China, the Laoag International Airport services numerous flights to Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Kaoshung.

Among the resource speakers invited to the event are Bernardo Villegas, senior vice president, University of Asia and the Pacific; Raul Hernandez vice president, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry for quality, productivity and environment; Jorge Judan commercial attaché currently based in Beijing; Eric Cerrudo of the Government Service Insurance System, and Samie Lim, vice president, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry for tourism, retailing and franchising.

Because of the overwhelming response, a second convention has been scheduled for May 27-29. For details, contact the Ilocos Norte Tourism, Trade and Investment Center (INTTIC) at (077) 770-5285, or log on to www.inttic.com.

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Editor Cesar D. Mangawang

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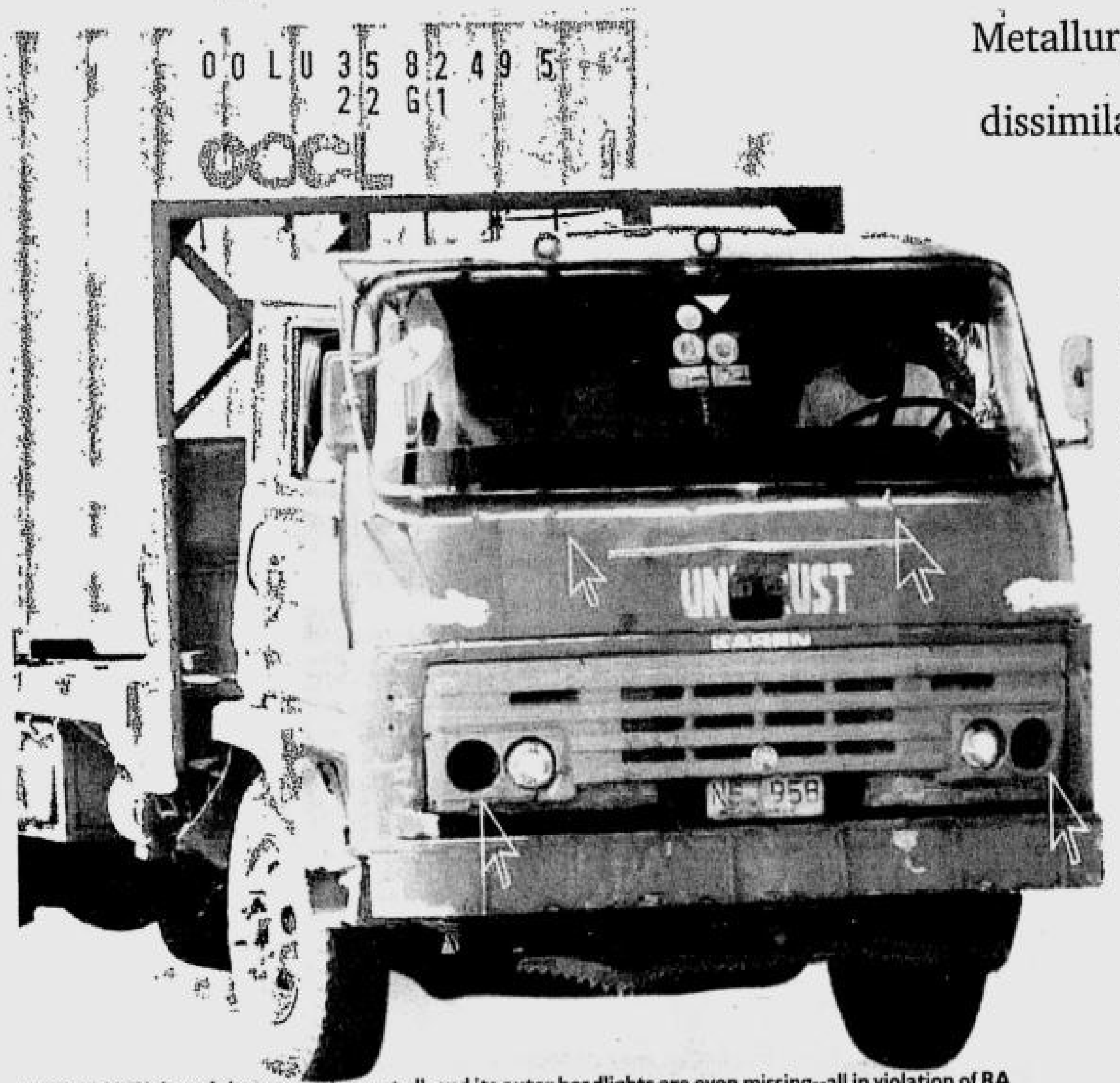


THIS TRUCK doesn't have any wipers at all, and its outer headlights are even missing--all in violation of RA 4136.

PHOTOS BY ALEX P. LOINAZ

By Tessa R. Salazar

IF YOU have the time (and the nerves), stand along a busy highway in Metro Manila for an hour and count the vehicles that are "road terrorists" or pose a grave danger to the rest of the motoring public.

Freelance motoring lensman Alex P. Loinaz did just that on April 21 along the South Luzon Expressway. In a span of exactly one hour, he counted 145 trucks and vans that had wrongly positioned windshield wipers or didn't have wipers at all, or did not have any outer low beam headlights.

In violation

All of these defects, Loinaz said, were in violation of the "repositioning standards" regulation required of all repositioned vehicles (those vehicles that were originally manufactured as right-hand drive vehicles and repositioned into left-hand drive for use in the Philippines).

Also among the violators spotted were vans with sliding doors opening at the left, facing the street (in an RHD road system, the sliding doors would open to the sidewalk).

What could be more alarming, and potentially more disastrous, is what lies beneath, hidden from view.

ANOTHER road terrorist missing its wipers. When the rain comes, what then?

Four years ago, INQUIRER Motoring's three-part article noted that most repositioned trucks and buses welded its steel brake pipes to a copper pipe and brazened this with brass.

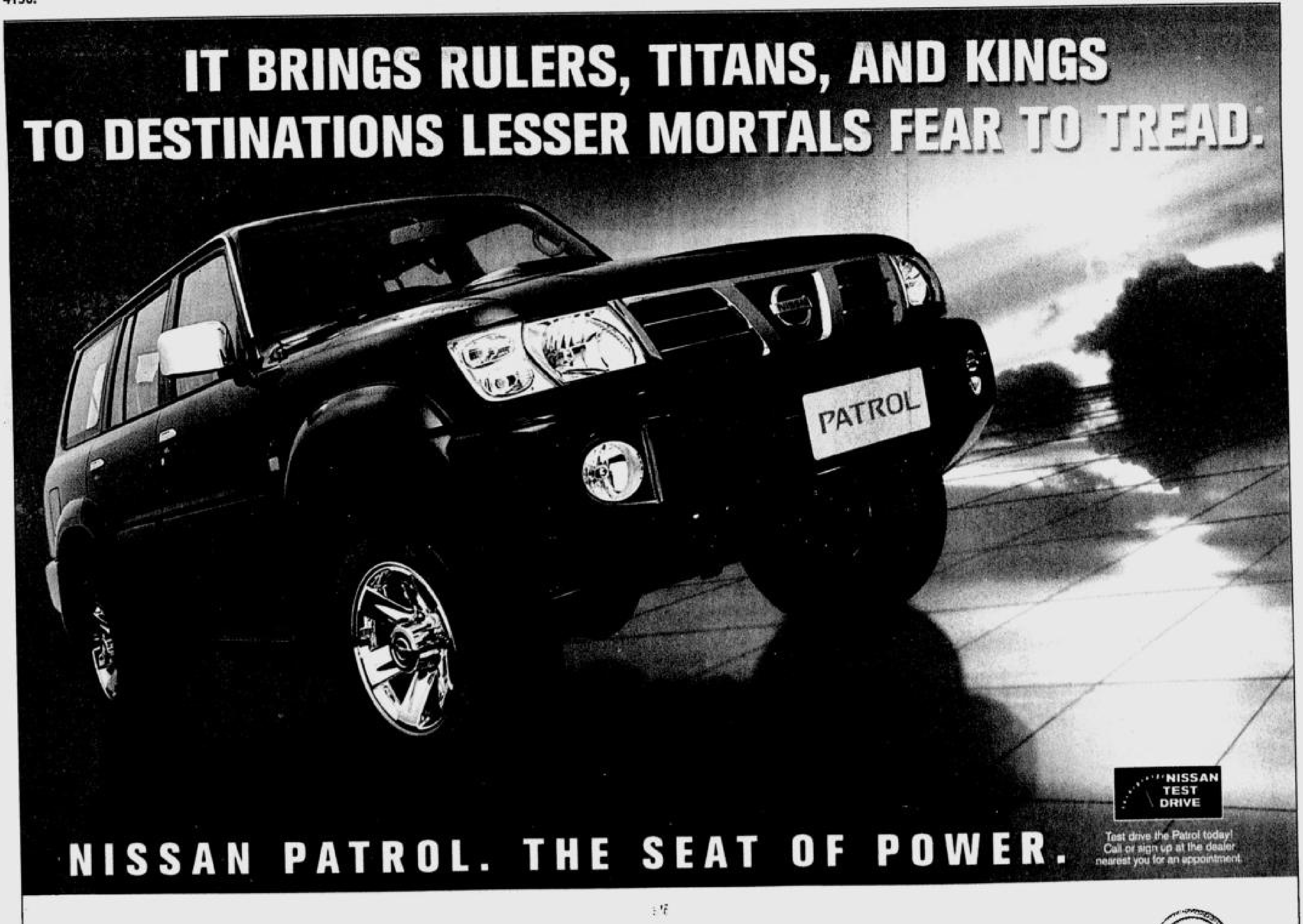
Metallurgists know that welding dissimilar metals cause galvanic corrosion.

In some cases, the air compressor of these haphazardly repositioned trucks bursts and the brakes fail. In extreme cases, the entire brake system and steering box literally collapses.

Dangers posed

When darkness falls on Philippine highways, the dangers posed by improperly converted RHD to LHD vehicles are compounded. Many trucks have wrongly positioned headlights—the left headlights sloping upward, blinding oncoming motorists, as the right headlights slope downward, preventing the driver from seeing pedestrians on the sidewalk from a safe distance ahead.

And when the rains come, a torrent of road disasters also await. The arm of improperly positioned windshield wipers (those designed for RHD vehicles) sweeps rain away from the driver, decreasing his or her field of vision. Indeed, driving a motor vehicle already risky as it is, these "road terrorists" freely plying the streets of the Philippines carries the potential of making the war-ravaged streets of Baghdad seem like a walk in the park.



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IN CHINA, SOUTHEAST ASIA

Swedish rack maker fortifies leadership

Text and photos by Charles E. Buban

THIS must be an exciting time for Thule, the world's leading manufacturer of load carriers for cars (rooftop boxes, roof rails, bike carriers) as well as snow chains and trailers.

Taking part in last week's Shanghai motor show, the Sweden-based company announces it is seeing a lot of growth potential in a country that is already considered the world's fourth largest car market (with 2.3 million cars sold last year).

"Although the growth in China's overall auto market has slowed sharply in the past year—from over 75 percent in 2003 to just 12 percent in 2004—our primary target market, the passenger car sector, has remained strong and is steadily growing," says GM Anders Nordin of Thule Shanghai.

Nordin is particularly excited about the upbeat outlook on the country's car industry that says China is estimated to have 50 million vehicles by 2010 and 100 million by 2020. "That's a lot of potential clients for Thule," he says.

Best time

For Nordin, this is the best time for Thule to start establishing a strong presence in China using all its experiences gained in other regions, most especially the Southeast Asia market.

"China market is so much like the Philippines and Thailand many, many years ago. As one can see, we sell a very specialized line of products and for a market unfamiliar with car rack systems, there is a need to convey the value of buying one and why they should opt for our brand," he explains.

Nordin says that compared to China, the Philippine market is already matured, meaning it already has a high level of brand awareness.

Positioning and promotion

Thule Philippines country manager Erwin Versoza relates that when his company was established in 1994, he relied on proper positioning and promotion of the products.

THE INCREASING purchasing power of the Chinese in recent years has meant booming car sales, which is good news for Thule.

PROMOTING closer ties, Versoza, left, recently met with Nordin, center, during the Shanghai motor show. With Versoza is DK-dwa Automotive Parts Corp. director Henry Liu.

FOR THULE, one way of building a strong brand awareness is by participating in various motor shows around the region.

"Since Thule is directed toward a very specialized group of customers, there is a need to properly convey how these products would allow, say, sports enthusiasts and active families and individuals to transport their equipment by car when they engage in their recreational and professional activities," says Versoza.

Indeed, it is this strategy that established Thule as a brand of high quality and superior workmanship among Filipino buyers.

"If we can match or even exceed such awareness here in China, imagine the possibilities," says Nordin.

Establishing headquarters

It was also this reason Thule decided late last year to establish a regional headquarters in Shanghai.

"The market in Southeast Asia is experiencing a healthy growth with the Philippines and Thailand leading the way. We want a similar thing to happen here in China and to do that we need to be here so we can closely monitor the developments," explains Nordin.

Nordin is particularly preparing for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, where he is expecting a lot of Chinese and tourists visiting ski and mountain resorts as well as other recreational destinations and who will be needing Thule products.

"A lot of these people will be bringing in their cars to these places and will surely appreciate having our car rack systems on the roof or at the back of their cars," says Nordin.

Similar trend

Versoza relates that Thule's growth in the Philippines was especially influenced by a similar trend: car owners started to travel more often either for vacation or to engage in their particular sports.

"They realize they need a much better load carrier, one that has aerodynamic shape to reduce wind drag and noise or one that can safely and effectively secure their loads wherever they may go," explains Versoza.

He says maintaining regular contact with Shanghai headquarters will definitely help his operations in the Philippines saying it's healthy to share business experiences and compare notes.

Detroit's 'No. 3' finds abaca—and home—in RP

By Tessa R. Salazar

FOR MOTOR Town's third most saleable automobile brand, feeling at home in the Philippines is as easy as ABC. Or if you want to sound Filipino about it, say "abaca," instead.

DaimlerChrysler reveals that it has been sourcing the natural fiber abaca from Leyte province as a worthy substitute for the glass fibers used in the assembly of its luxury cars.

This developed as DaimlerChrysler just recently set a firm corporate foothold on the Philippine commercial landscape.

During his April 28 visit to the country, DaimlerChrysler Southeast Asia president and CEO Rainer Thiel stressed the automobile company's worldwide retail offensive to invest in a broad range of DaimlerChrysler brands and products.

Philippine distributor

He cited the Philippines' CATS Motors as "a committed, resourceful and experienced partner in the Philippines."

Thiel was referring to CATS Motors' appointment as the Philippine distributor of its Mercedes-Benz, Maybach, Chrysler, Jeep and Dodge lines three months ago, virtually authorizing CATS Motors to sell and conduct after-sales services of selected DaimlerChrysler brands and products.

CATS Motors Inc. chair Gregorio T. Yu, in turn, assured DaimlerChrysler that it would live up to the expectations of the company and its loyal customers.

Felix Ang, president of CATS Motors, reminisced the dealership's early days on Edsa in 1989 when it offered the first specially designed one-stop car accessories, tires and services facility.

"For me, the road has been even longer since I started in the automotive industry as an assistant to the owner of small car accessories shop in Quezon City while I was still in my teens. To stand here tonight in front of all of you is a dream come true for me," he said.

Thiel was accompanied by Udo Loersch, vice president of external affairs of DCSea, and Helfried Scharf, DCSea head of corporate communications.

DR. RAINER Thiel, President and Chief Executive Officer, DaimlerChrysler South East Asia Pte Ltd (left), visits the Mercedes-Benz display together with Greg Yu, CATS Motors Chairman (center) and Felix Ang, CATS Motors President (right). ULYSSES ANG

Sourcing abaca from Leyte

Aside from its past involvement in social and environment projects in the country, Thiel mentioned that DaimlerChrysler was currently engaged in a project on the island of Leyte, where researchers were looking into industrial applications for fibers of the abaca plant.

DaimlerChrysler has been using natural fibers such as flax, hemp, sisal and coconut for several years for its vehicle interiors. Recently, it had been using a natural fiber component in the underfloor protection of its passenger cars.

This new source of natural fiber was abaca. The natural fiber project leader at DaimlerChrysler Research in Ulm Ralph Greiner described in a statement that the abaca fibers were the world's longest and strongest natural fibers, adding that the fibers were extremely light and high-performance fibers.

Greiner said the abaca fiber in Leyte was the first natural fiber to meet DaimlerChrysler's strict quality requirements for components used on the exterior of road vehicles that encounter resistance to influences such as stone strikes and exposure to damp elements.

A public-private partnership, the abaca project in the Philippines was formed between the European Natural Heritage Fund, the University of Hohenheim, Germany, Leyte State University and DaimlerChrysler.

Abaca experts said high-quality abaca fibers in the country were set for use as a substitute for glass fibers in the manufacture of composites for the production of interior and exterior parts of luxury cars and automobiles.

Advantages

DaimlerChrysler outlined the following technological, environmental and socioeconomic advantages of sourcing abaca in the country:

- Reduction of the weight of cars and improving the stiffness and damping characteristics of car parts
- Reduction of cost in the manufacture of parts where raw materials are produced
- Economic activities generated by the abaca projects benefit the rural communities
- Reduced emissions from automobiles as a result of the reduction of weight of cars and protection of the environment as a result of planting abaca in different agro-systems
- Research, and private sectors also benefit.

Vir Diwa and X-Trail; innovative Innova

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

EARLY in April (my favorite month), the Nissan Motor Philippines Inc. (NMPI) launched the 2005 Nissan X-Trail, whose external looks make it more rugged than its predecessor but whose engine performance is as impeccable as ever. Right, DJ-san?

The X-Trail has a track record in that it took the motoring world by storm the first time it hit the road. When it was first unveiled a while back, the late Vir Diwa of NMPI called it "the best thing that ever happened to NMPI in many, many years." Thus, each time I see an X-Trail breeze by me these days, I always remember Vir Diwa, that gentle creature of immense humility.

Chosen the Best Compact SUV in the recent 2004 Car of the Year Awards, the new Nissan X-Trail added features like the hyper roof rail, engine cover in ABS plastic and rugged 5-spoke alloy rims.

Its standard features for all variants are the redesigned Euro-version chrome V-grille, glittering side lamps, rear European running lamps and baby fender mirrors. The 200X and the 4x2 have a sporty roof spoiler as standard.

* * *

The X-Trails still retain the efficient and lively QR series engines with "All-Mode Four-Wheel-Drive" system for applicable models. Used in the 4x4 variants, the system in Auto Mode features a "no-slip on start-ups" technology, which gives the X-Trail power on all four wheels when the accelerator pedal is depressed. The X-Trail's computer system does the disengaging of 4x4 when it is not needed. The advanced selectable, all-wheel-drive system was derived from the popular race-ready Skyline GTR, and gives the X-Trail its excellent on road handling attributes.

"The X-Trail's platform is one of the most up-to-date among compact SUVs in the market anywhere. The changes we introduced to the X-Trail are designed to increase its visual desirability. But they are also functional, aside from making it look extremely good," said Raymond Tribdino, NMPI market and product planning manager.

One example of the functional innovation is the hyper roof rail, available only in the X-Trail 250X. It is a great driving aid in heavy fog or while cruising dark provincial roads. Providing as much 30 percent more forward illumination, the lamps have also been angled in such a way that drivers of vehicles from the opposing lane are not blinded nor distracted by glare.

Said Tribdino: "Our X-Trail market is very knowledgeable and many of these features we added actually came from suggestions of X-Trail buyers and owners."

New to the X-Trail 250X are the five-spoke alloy rims with thicker sections, which give it a very distinctive look from the X-Trail 200X and 200.

* * *

Following the athletic and robust looks of the X-Trail's European cousins, the chrome V-grille gives it the look of the new "Nissan-ness," which is a unique and identifiable look similar to most Nissans worldwide.

"The X-Trail is a strong contender in its segment," said Tribdino, "and is keeping the competition on its toes. Last year, we have a small 182-unit difference in total annual sales compared to our closest competitor. Considering the time the X-Trail has existed in the Philippine market, that already means a lot."

Aside from the X-Trail, I keep telling friends and the late Vir Diwa that Raymond Tribdino is also one of the best things that ever happened to NMPI. Honest. Tribdino knows where he speaks of because he used to be a topnotch motoring journalist before Vir Diwa helped get Raymond aboard NMPI.

Vir couldn't be prouder.

* * *

I missed the recent Innova Road Trek Adventure that pitted motoring journalists during a three-day sojourn in Iloilo City, Roxas City and Kalibo. The Panay powwow ended in a frolic in the sun in Boracay as only the likes of Toyota's Danny Isla and Ariel de Jesus could ever dream of.

Toyota organized the event to let its friends in the media experience firsthand the new features and revolutionary performance of the new Innova, which had quickly established itself as the best-selling vehicle in less than two months after it rolled out of the assembly lines. Already, Innova's two-month sales of 2,161 units has outsold any other vehicle in the market today.

TOYOTA INNOVA ROAD TREK ILOILO to BORACAY

What fascinates me most about the Innova is its revolutionary concept of the Filipino family car. Look, it can comfortably seat 8 persons, but it can also pack 20 adults. Its retractable seats can expand into 3 rows and can configure 10 kinds of arrangements. Who can top that?

* * *

The Innova Road Trek Adventure, said Elijah Marcial, had for gracious hosts in Iloilo: Robert Uy, Helen Romingquit, Remy Pena, Roque Jarillo and Pamela Gregorios.

From Iloilo, the trek moved on to Capiz via Roxas City.

Okay, you want history?

Capiz is once part of the early Malay settlement known as Aklan. It is composed of 16 municipalities, one chartered city (Roxas City) and 472 barangays. Its capital, Roxas City, is the seat of government.

The trekkers moved on to the Ati-atihan town of Kalibo, the capital of Aklan and the socio-economic center of northern Panay Island. This urban center is home to about 65,000 largely self-reliant and ingenious Kalibonbons—people proud of their rich cultural heritage, primarily the world-famous Ati-atihan Festival every January.

Cheers to Auto Review, Manila Times and ABS-CBN Manila Standard for finishing 1-2-3 in the Innova Road Trek Adventure. I wasn't with you, guys and dolls, but in spirit, I was with you—as only Ariel de Jesus knows pretty well.

* * *

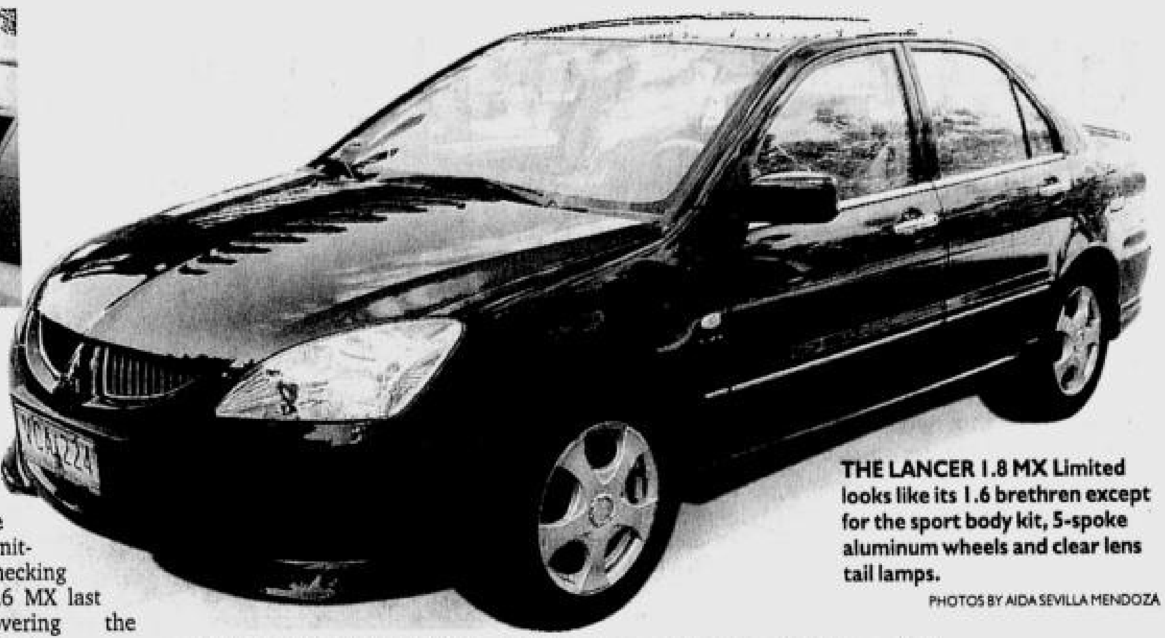
MONTERO MOTION: If you're looking for a new, diesel-powered SUV, give the Mitsubishi Montero a shot. It packs power, besides a look that makes heads turn.

* * *

QUOTE ME. Shoulders at both NLEX and SLEX are for emergency use only. When I use them, does that not mean I am on emergency mode?

A DVD player and tuner with pop-up touch screen LCD monitor are found in the middle of the Lancer 1.8 MX's dashboard.

GENUINE leather and 4-speed Invecs-II automatic transmission with Sportronic for the 165 ps Mivec engine



THE LANCER 1.8 MX Limited looks like its 1.6 brethren except for the sport body kit, 5-spoke aluminum wheels and clear lens tail lamps.

PHOTOS BY AIDA SEVILLA MENDOZA

2 from Mitsubishi

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

MANY people wonder why Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. continues to run second to top-notcher Toyota in sales performance. In Japan and North America, sales by Mitsubishi Motors have slumped in the last 15 months after the company admitted to having hidden defects in its cars twice in five years. Mitsubishi Motors, Japan's only unprofitable carmaker now, is still seeking to restore its brand image in its home country and abroad.

So how come Mitsubishi motor vehicles still sell well here and in other Southeast Asian countries? Perhaps it's because MMPC offers car buyers the widest range of products to choose from: the Adventure AUV, Lancer compact sedan, Galant midsize sedan, L200 XT pickup, Strada pickup, Outlander compact SUV, Pajero midsize SUV, Space Gear minivan and starting early this year, the Grandis MPV and Montero Sport midsize SUV. Plus, for industrial use, the L300 cab and chassis, the 12-seater L300 Exceed and Versa Van, Canter truck, Rosa coaster and several other trucks and buses.

Or perhaps it's because the Pajero's winning the tough Paris-Dakar Rally year after year since 1982 proves that Mitsubishi vehicles can't be all that bad. The Lancer Evolution's reputation as one of the fastest cars in the world doesn't harm, either.

Lancer 1.8 MX

I haven't been lucky enough to test-drive an EVO, but I did get my hands on the Lancer 1.8 MX Limited recently after checking out the Lancer 1.6 MX last year ("Rediscovering the Lancer," Aug. 5, 2004).

When it comes to the 1.8 MX, don't judge a book by its cover. The 1.8 MX looks exactly the same as the 1.6 MX except for new clear lens tail lamps and sport body kit consisting of a front chin spoiler, rear spoiler and rear skirt plus a tiny white "Limited" insignia beside the left tail lamp. The aluminum wheels of the 1.8 MX are five-spoke unlike the 1.6 MX's six-spoke, but they are still 15-inchers shod with 195/60 R15 tires.

The safety features are the same—dual SRS airbags, 4-wheel disc brakes with ABS and EBD plus others—and the fully independent suspension system is the same.

Invecs–III CVT

Inside the cabin, the similarity continues with plush leather upholstery and woodgrain paneling in a two-tone setting. Mitsubishi's Invecs-III CVT (Continuously Variable Transmission) with 6-speed Sportronic is there, too, enabling the driver to switch effortlessly from automatic to clutch-less manual gear-shifting. The most notable difference in the cockpit is the presence of a DVD player and tuner with pop-up touch screen LCD monitor in the middle of the dashboard.

It is when you open the hood and peek at the engine that you see the big difference. The 4G93, 1.8-liter, SOHC, 16-valve powerplant with factory headers produces 123 ps /6,000 rpm max output and 16.5 Kg-m/4,500 rpm max torque. When you take the wheel and drive the 1.8 MX fast on a relatively traffic-free expressway, you will experience the exhilarating difference in power.

But is the additional 13 PS output worth the P60,000 price difference since the 1.8 MX costs P898,000 while the 1.6 MX costs P838,000? If you enjoy driving, that is a silly question.

Grandis

Another recently launched Mitsubishi is the Grandis multi-purpose vehicle (MPV), the fourth generation successor of the Space Wagon. A stylish, graceful seven-seater propelled by a 2.4-liter, 4-inline Mivec (Mitsubishi Innovative Valve timing and lift Electronic Control) SOHC 16-valve engine delivering 165 ps/6,000 rpm max output and 22.1 kg-m/4,000 rpm max torque, the Grandis offers the quiet riding comfort of a big luxury car, the seating versatility of an MPV and the cargo capacity of a pickup truck.

Since MPVs are designed to transport families, space and flexibility are important. The 2-3-2 seating layout of the Grandis can be rearranged six other ways and when the second and third rows of seats are folded flat, cargo space is increased to 1,545 liters and extends to 1,600 mm in length. The second row seat splits 60/40 and can be reclined all the way back while the third row seat splits 50/50 and can be reclined or folded flat in individual halves or stowed away under the floor.

Mivec engine

A mom mobile the Grandis may be, yet it accelerates smartly and handles decently for its size. For that you can credit the 165 ps Mivec engine mated to a 4-speed Invecs-II automatic transmission with Sportronic mode. The Grandis' engine, in fact, is more powerful than the Toyota Previa's and the Honda Odyssey's.

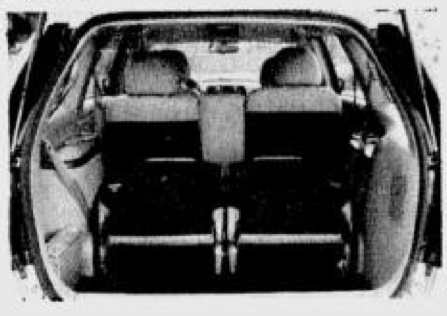
Considering all the above plus the Grandis' all-wheel independent suspension, plush leather seats, cozy, high-quality interior and full array of safety equipment (such as dual airbags, 4-wheel disc brakes with ABS and EBD) and conveniences (such as 6 cupholders, 4 bottle holders, rear sensors) it looks like a good buy at P1,480,000. The Previa, by the way, costs P258,000 more.

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Reality is the leading cause of stress.

* * *

(E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph.)



THE GRANDIS' third row seat splits 50/50 and can be folded forward in individual halves or stowed under the floor to increase cargo space.

THE STYLISH Grandis multipurpose vehicle replaces the Space Wagon.

BUS FLEET SUPPLIER

Isuzu Philippines Corp. recently released to Erjohn and Almark Transit Corp. an Isuzu FTR33P (front door) 61-seater, air-conditioned bus that is powered by 200 PS 6HH1 engine. It will supply a total of 50 units to EATC, which will be used as commuter buses for these routes: Alabang-Lawton; Dasmariñas, Cavite–Lawton; and, Balayan, Batangas–Lawton. From left are Art Gavino, EATC HR/general services manager; Lito Santiaguel, EATC president; Mario Ojales, IPC bus sales manager; Tony Litonjua, Almazora Motors Corp. VP for marketing; and engineer Ramil Mendoza, IPC technical manager.

Shell, Ferrari renew partnership

SHELL is to renew its technical partnership with Ferrari for a further five years from 2006 until the end of 2010.

The contract details, which will remain classified, do agree terms under which Shell will continue to provide fuels and lubricants to Ferrari's road car division as well as its racing operation.

Ferrari president and CEO Luca Di Montezemolo, Ferrari managing director Jean Todt and Shell Downstream CEO Rob Routs will sign anew the sponsorship contract in Imola at the San Marino Grand Prix this weekend.

Powering and protecting Ferrari road cars and its racing operations, Shell products were used in the very first Ferrari cars and Shell played a key role in Ferrari's first Formula One appearance in 1950.

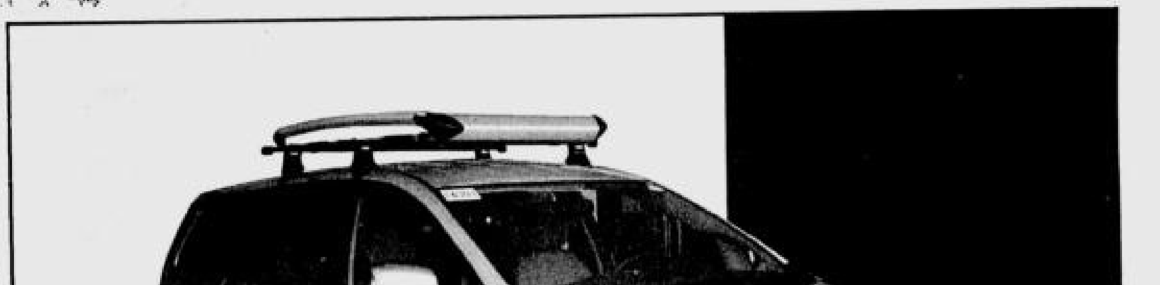
Since then, Shell has powered Ferrari to eight Formula One Constructors' crowns and 11 Drivers' titles. Since 1996, it has pioneered trackside analysis techniques that account in part for Ferrari's phenomenal mechanical reliability record.

"We are delighted to be continuing our technical partnership with Shell into 2010," said Todt. Said Todt: "Shell gives us a real competitive advantage in terms of reliability and performance. In fact our partnership is now even more important given the recent rule changes affecting engine life. We have one of the strongest technical relationships in the pit lane and the partnership has, and will continue to, play a key role in our success."

"Formula One is the natural meeting place for a car manufacturer and an oil company, since it provides an opportunity to develop mechanical and product performance in the field and under extreme conditions," commented Juan Carlos Perez, vice president, Shell Brands International.

"We are delighted to re-sign with Ferrari. Our relationship with Ferrari is one of the most mutually beneficial technical partnerships in automotive history—long may it continue!"

Ferrari's Formula One and road car operations provide a formidable testing ground for monitoring such features as wear resistance, high temperature engine thermal protection systems and reduction of internal abrasion.



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68,000 drool at Manila Motor Show

By Tessa R. Salazar

A TOTAL foot traffic of over 68,000 persons—averaging 23,000 a day—trooped to the World Trade Center in Pasay City from Thursday to Saturday last week to soak in the sights and sounds of the country's first Manila Motor Show.

This figure was recently released by the show organizers, which included Worldbex International Services Inc., Alvin Uy and Jason and Ulysses Ang.

And though the Manila Motor Show was six times smaller than the Bangkok Motor Show (8,500 square meters plus 1,500 sq m of outdoor exhibition space versus Bangkok's 72,000 sq m), talks are rife that next year's MMS will attract not just local but regional visitors as well.

Preview exhibits

As the inaugural MMS proved more as a preview of a grander MMS in 2006, there were many preview exhibits within the show itself. A preview of the Ford Focus yielded 482 inquiries. Another preview was four Toyota SUV Fortuner, which was showcased by a 10-minute drive-by at the WTC grounds. In the show's second day, a Benz CLS and five Peugeot cars were sold. One exhibitor sold all its cars in its exhibit area during the span of the show.

Volvo's 210-sq-m display was chosen as "Best Exhibition Booth" because of overall design, difficulty in execution, architectural balance and harmony, adherence to its corporate identity and concept. A double-sided opaque glass screen served as a monitor showing the latest videos of Volvo models and its unique features.

Ford Group Philippines has the biggest outdoor and indoor exhibition space at the Manila Motor Show with a total of 210 square meters of interior showcase and over 1,000 square meters of outdoor space comprising of a specially designed, outdoor 4x4 circuit track exclusively for Ford SUVs and pickups, Ford has the biggest combined outdoor and indoor showcase in the recently concluded Manila Motor Show.

A specially imported Ford Focus (World Rally Championship) WRC-inspired rally car was also prominently displayed in their indoor exhibition together with a stock Ford Focus that whetted the automotive appetites of Ford enthusiasts.

Biggest single showcase

BMW put out the biggest indoor single showcase with 345 square meters. There were four sedans and an X3 SUV including a few BMW Motor Bikes. A total of four special space frame trusses were hoisted over its exhibition area that were attached with a plethora of halogen spotlights and floodlights.

There were BMW short movies that attracted BMW and motorsport fans alike. This exhibition excludes the six BMW classic and contemporary cars showcased in the Heritage Section of the MMS. Proudly displayed was a genealogical lineup of the 3 series that started with the venerable and iconic BMW 2002 model, the E21, E30, E36 and E46 variants.

Most powerful showcase

Mitsubishi came out with the most powerful showcase with a lineup of 10 Lancer Evolution cars and the legendary Galant VR 4WD organized by the Emperor Motorsports Group. A complete historical lineage starting from a correct and period Lancer Evolution One to the Lancer Evolution Eight was assembled in this unprecedented event (Only Evo 9 was absent). With an average horsepower rating of 300 bhp on each vehicle, Mitsubishi has the most powerful showcase on a brand to brand basis.

Jaguar and Land Rover Philippines came out with the most expensive showcase having an armada of two Italian sports cars and two British luxury saloons and three British luxury SUVs. A 360 Ferrari Modena, Maserati Spyder, Land Rover Discovery 3, Freelander, Range Rover, Jaguar X-type and Jaguar XJ were showcased with a combined value of over P50 million.

THE MANILA Motor Show welcomed more than 68,000 visitors during its three-day run, as it attracted car enthusiasts, buyers, and family members to the World Trade Center. Filipinos love cars, and this time, it showed!

PHOTO BY ULYSSES ANG OF MOTIONCARS.COM

Organizers say that all these cars were brought in tax paid and through legitimate channels under the exclusive dealership of the Philippine distributor.

Brightest show

Mercedes-Benz and Chrysler came out with the brightest show with a light tower and with a total of over a hundred 40-watt fluorescent lamps and a few dozen halogen spotlights. A car rotisserie dominated the display, showcasing the all-new CLS model.

Also consistent crowd drawers were the BMW motorcycles and the 3 Series, the Mitsubishi Ralliart booth beside the Evolution cars, Toyota Formula 1, the Jaguar booth, Universal Motors Corp. and the Volvo booths. Viking Cars literally transported its Volvo Pasong Tamo showroom and laid it out as its centerpiece, virtually ensuring for itself the best booth award.

Ford Philippines was also one happy exhibitor as it was flooded with 100 inquiries in one day alone in its off-road course and test-driving arena in front of the WTC grounds. Ford offered for testing its Ranger, Escape, Everest and Explorer brands.

Public debut

Several manufacturers also held their brands' public debut at the show, including the BMW 3 Series, the BMW X3 2.0 diesel fitted with "intelligent" AWD system xDrive with electronically controlled multiple plate clutch, the Chrysler 300C, Town & Country and Dodge Durango.

Also introduced were Hyundai Getz, Matrix CRDI, Sonata, Tucson, Kia Sorento diesel, Mercedes Benz CLS, Peugeot 807, and 307SW.

Other not-to-be-missed exhibits were those of Isuzu Philippines' booth and Mitsubishi's Grandis, Montero Sport, Pajero and Adventure.

The Heritage section at the MMS included a lineup of Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution Series, generational lineup of BMW 3 Series—from the 2002 to the previous-model E46, courtesy of the E30 club; Mazda 323, courtesy of the Protege Club and RX-8, courtesy of Ford Group Philippines.

Motorcade

The opening day on April 28 saw a motorcade of 2004 Car of the Year Philippines' 10 category winners driven by Car Awards Groups Inc. members (motoring journalists from different publications and webzines), with Binibining Pilipinas winners as their beauteous passengers.

The Honda Accord 3-L V6 was accorded the pomp and pageantry deserving of 2004's car of the year, as 10 minutes of a flying-and-swinging dance act from Powerdance.

The Manila Motor Show also acknowledged auto organizations such as the Philippine Autosport Council, AAP (Automotive Association of the Philippines), Mercedes-Benz Club of the Philippines, Porsche Club, BMW E-30 Club, Emperor Motorsports (Lancer Evo Club), PDRF (Philippine Drag Racing Federation). Old School Club, and Die Cast Club of the Philippines.

The 8,500-sq-m WTC exhibition area was filled with 23 car marquees that also included Audi, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Dodge, Honda, Hummer, Kia, Land Rover, Mazda, Maserati, Nissan, Porsche and Ssangyong. *With reports from Alvin Uy and Jason Ang*

Rocket-flavored pony ride

CATCH MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

IT IS proper to be practical and frugal in these wearisome times. This is as everything costs more than it should; at least that's how many working stiffs like myself feel. The increasing prices ask us to be more mindful of the puny peso that we earn and spend in our little banana republic economy.

We all know we could do without the pints of Chocolate Cherry Garcia or Chubby Hubby in our shopping carts (for the benefit of both wallet and waistline) but life would just become a little harder to swallow. We need to spoil ourselves once in a while or even at least dream of the velvety goodness of real unadulterated ice cream.

Should our driving and our choice of vehicle follow the pattern of our grocery shopping in these lean times? Technically, it should since spirited driving devours obscene amounts of fuel and ownership of sports and luxury cars is an indulgence that can easily be seen as a sin by the angry masses of the third world.

Equally satisfying

Can we therefore find a car that can equally satisfy our primitive need for pace and our politically-correct principles? Enter the unassuming Mitsubishi Colt hot hatch; one-half "polite urban grocery hauler/preschool bus" and one-half "screaming Banzai berserker."

The obvious choice of our attention is the CZT model with a gasoline-fed, 1.5-liter turbocharged and intercooled, inline four. Its power output of 150 bhp and 155 ft lb of torque almost ensures acceleration throughout the entire range of gear ratios. The century mark (100 kph) is breached in a factory claimed eight seconds flat and the needle on the speedometer will go all the way to 210 kph.

The other engine is the direct injection diesel (DI-D, in Mitsubishi nomenclature) 1,500 cc, 3 cylinder. The diesel shares the torque of the turbo (an equal 155 ft lb) but has fewer horses with a less than sexy 112 bhp. It gets to a hundred slower than its gasoline brethren (9.9 seconds) but is still firmly in the rare air of the "sub-ten second hot hatch" stratosphere. The diesel's top speed is claimed at a more reasonable and sedate 180 kph. Airbags are common all around, with the CZT thankfully receiving double the number of airbags of its slower ilk.

Leading role

Fuel figures are decent but not exceptional, as performance takes a leading role over efficiency: the CZT is claimed to do 17 km/l (highway) while the DI-D version can supposedly squeeze 25 km from a single liter of diesel in flowing traffic. Pricing in Europe is excellent as the CZT is just 10 percent more than the cost of an all-option Honda Jazz. The DI-D version is the true value proposition as it is 10 percent cheaper than the index vehicle used in this evaluation.

Despite the already spicy performance that can be had with currently available models, Mitsubishi is rumored to have more fire in store for this platform. A market logical step would be to reach for the 200 bhp power output range, probably with a larger 1.8-liter or 2.0-liter turbo combination. This will allow the Colt's mechanical twin, the Smart ForFour, to go after its sworn objective: the 200 bhp Mini Cooper S Works. As the ForFour is already showroom available in Brabus tuning and styling trim, the infusion of more horsepower will allow a closer fight, especially for the hearts, minds and paychecks of upwardly mobile enthusiasts around the world.

The ultimate version of the Colt will probably be a version for WRC campaigning, as it was already slated to replace the Lancer platform in Ralliart (the rally specific motorsport arm of Mitsubishi) press releases a few years ago. At the time, budget constraints and an unsure future shelved the development of what surely would have been every boy racer's wet dream: a factory-tuned Mitsubishi Colt Evolution.

Versions for public consumption would very likely have imitated those of previous Evolution showroom models, with at least 280 bhp via a 2.0-liter turbo allowing 0-100 kph acceleration in about six seconds, ending at a 250 kph terminal velocity. The package would have been rounded out with all-wheel drive and a flash body kit that, with all certainty, have been copied and used to spruce up all make and manner of vehicles.

Practical car

As we collectively wipe the drool from our chins, we have to remember that the Colt is a practical car first and foremost. It is after all a hatchback with more mundane roots. The rear seats give way to a cavernous interior—almost de rigueur with any modern hatchback design. A housewife can now, in theory, carry on with her daily chores at a greatly accelerated clip. In stock form, it is pleasant to look at but is not striking or attention grabbing.

Many will point to the fact that it typically looks like what a "new millennium hatchback" is supposed to look like while some will cry foul and cite general styling cues found in other brands' super mini's today. The Mitsubishi Colt CZT will allow motoring in anonymity—something that is not such a bad thing given these uncertain times, but allow the driver a moment or two of personal expression via the accelerator pedal; please pass the ice cream scooper.

(Note: The Mitsubishi Colt is not yet available in the Philippines and there are no concrete plans for it to be brought in. Those wishing to get a closer look at this car will have to look to the Internet and foreign automotive publications. Don't hold your breath.)

Michelin booth attracts visitors at Automobile of the Year exhibit

MICHELIN, the world's leader in tires, impressed visitors to the Automobile of the Year 2005-People's Choice with its display booth during the event's opening on April 16 and 17 at the Bonifacio Global City. Michelin is the presenting sponsor of the event.

People who flocked in droves to the Michelin booth participated in activities such as the tire matching contest, wherein visitors could match the tires on display with the appropriate driving need.

Perfect score

Those who submitted a perfect score were given a chance to draw prizes such as Michelin giveaways and an exciting ride in a Michelin Pilot Sport-equipped rally car on a slalom course.

There was also the Energy XM1 rolling resistance demonstration, wherein the characteristics of the Energy XM1 were compared to that of an ordinary compound, showing the former's advantage over the latter. This translates into longer mileage and therefore increased fuel and savings in the long run. Also available was a souvenir photo opportunity with the Michelin's world-famous mascot Bibendum.

Michelin product specialists from Michelin dealers Roadstar at the Fort and Minerva Tire Gallery at Market! Market! were also on hand to answer inquiries regarding Michelin products. A Honda Jazz fitted with Michelin tires was also available for patrons to drive on the course at a leisurely speed.

Biggest hit

The biggest hit was a demonstration of the Pilot Sport tires' renowned performance characteristics on a slalom course, wherein lucky visitors were allowed to ride in a Michelin Pilot Sport-equipped rally car. The demonstration showed the tire's ability to enhance driver control during hard acceleration, cornering and braking without sacrificing ride comfort.

Said rally driver Dindo de Jesus commenting on the tires' characteristics: "The Michelin Pilot Sports are surprisingly soft riding and have plenty of grip. They are good for daily trips and the occasional spirited drive."

Peter Binamira, managing director of Alter Media Solutions, was one of those who were strapped into the rally-prepared vehicle. He gave this assessment on the tires: "On takeoff the tires had very good initial grip even when mounted on a car with around 180 hp. The tires were very, very impressive most specially during braking. It's hard to believe that these are actually street tires."

MICHELIN
MICH

MICHELIN mascot Bibendum, left, with Nilo Luna, general manager of Tiara Commercial and Industrial Corp.

Well-attended exhibit

Nilo Luna, general manager of Tiara Commercial and Industrial Corp.—exclusive distributor of Michelin tires in the Philippines—was upbeat about the event and Michelin's participation. "The exhibit was well attended by car manufacturers and we expect that more visitors will come in the next two weekends."

The Michelin booth was open during the Automobile of the Year 2005-People's Choice test drive and exhibit at the Bonifacio Global City on April 30.

Next generation car cleaning system

CLEANING cars is not as simple as hosing it down, shampooing, rinsing, drying it off, applying wax then buffing. There is a special technique to preserving a vehicle's polish and gloss that does not necessarily mean spending a lot of time and money. Complementing the proper way to cleaning a vehicle is Microtex Ultimate Cleaning Cloth, made of microfibers.

Microfibers are highly durable and absorbent ultra fine threads that is 100 times finer than human hair, which result from interweaving 80 percent polyester and 20 percent polyamide or nylon then splitting them into sections that can trap dirt and dust particles like a magnet. When made into a cloth, it is able to reach the tiniest hole on any surface area, suck out the foreign matter and deposit these in the cloth until it is washed off.

Now in the Philippines, there's a specific Microtex cleaning cloth made perfect for all your needs. They can be used dry, moist or wet, depending on the surface to be cleaned, and with or without chemicals.

The Chamois is best for cleaning and absorbing, picking up dirt, grease and grime easily.

Suede is used for sensitive surfaces and is effective for cleaning and buffing.

The Ultra has a unique micro structure and is perfect for glass and car interiors; it can be used with just water or with chemicals. Plush cleans with static electricity, catching dust and is perfect for removing wax residues. Its rich texture allows it to reach every nook and cranny for total cleaning.

Try the Ultra Plush with over 200,000 fibers per square inch, meaning more dirt grabbers, and an extra shiny buffing.

The ultimate drying towel is the Elite, which can clean a medium-sized vehicle in no time. It is 10 times softer than cotton and is lightweight yet durable.

Microtex Ultimate Cleaning Cloth is distributed by Winter Snow Marketing (742-7834-36) and is now available in major car dealers around Metro Manila.

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LIFESTYLE

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Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**
Chief of Correspondents **Pam Pastor**

Sugar Raise
Dunkin' Donuts
Classics

Summer lovin'

During love month, we asked you to send us your love stories and creative expressions of affection. You didn't disappoint. 2bU! readers are a sweet lot. You swamped us with over a thousand entries—beautiful letters, touching scrapbooks, colorful works of art, Powerpoint presentations and even videos of your great romance.

The winners have been chosen. This week, we're publishing our favorite entries in an issue that we dedicate to our mothers, who taught us how to love. For a complete list of winners, check page G2.

My sweet angel

By Joy-Conopio Cruz

LAST Valentine's day, I opened my eyes and saw my sleeping eight-month-old baby Isabella beside me and I smiled. It was her very first Valentine's day and she inspired me to write this love letter.

Dearest Bea,

Happy Valentine, my Love!

Waking up every morning and seeing you cuddled up beside is such a wonderful blessing. I could just watch you sleep for hours—you are so beautiful, my baby-and feel the warmth of sunshine in my heart. And that does not even come close to describing how I truly feel about you.

I love you because you have your Daddy's adorable little eyes. I love your incredibly tiny lips, your charming "cheeny-chin-chin," your stubby but cute fingers and toes, and your soft, delicate, sweet-scented skin.

Best of all, I love the way you smile. Your eyes are reduced to tiny slits, your dimples appear, and your nose crinkles up as you break into a wide, mischievous smile. Ahh... sheer joy!

Although I must admit that taking care of you can be physically exhausting (I mean, really!), remember that I will never tire of loving you. And even though I somehow miss the routine of working in an office, nothing beats giving you a warm bath in the morning or changing your diaper or watching your favorite "Sesame Street" with you.

You make me want to be the best mother I could possibly become. I promise to do everything I can to nurture you, guide you, mold you and help you grow up to be a beautiful person inside as well as outside. Now that I think about it, I believe that is my preordained mission in life.

I thank the Lord every day because of you. My life wasn't a bed of roses. I have been through a lot of pain and suffering, but I'm willing to go through all that again if only for you.

The Book of Psalms says, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." [37:4] You, my sweet angel, are the ultimate fulfillment of my heart's desires. You are the sum of all my hopes and dreams. You are the single most precious gift I have ever had—the perfect proof of God's goodness in my life.

To you I can honestly and sincerely say that famous line from a movie, "You complete me." I cannot imagine me without you. I love you so much, Bea!

Mommy
February 14, 2005

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How to fall in love in 10 days

By Joanna Cayabyab

IRIS Vincent and Joanna

I MET Iris Vincent Sanchez Mori on February 7, 2004. It was my dorm's open house and it was my roommate who introduced him to me.

My roommate had been bugging me days before that her orgmate wanted to know me. When Iris and I met, I couldn't look him in the eye because I was so embarrassed at the way we were introduced. I kidded my roommate later on, *"Binebenta mo ata ako ah."*

Then she suddenly dropped the bombshell. "He's asking if he can have a date with you on the 14th..." My reaction was, "Huwaaat?"

Blame it on her convincing skills, but she got me to say yes anyway.

I was nervous and ecstatic that day. I didn't know what to expect. I just said to myself, "What have I got to lose if ever I decide to eat dinner with this guy?" Gaining a new friend was perhaps the best thing I could get out of the date. The worst would be to spend two hours just staring at my plate.

But fate was kind. Iris was (and still is!) the perfect gentleman. He opened doors for me, and he made sure he was always about two steps behind me. He filled our date with his jokes, and there was never dead air in our conversations.

My worst fears about blind dates being a disaster suddenly vanished. I thought I was pretty lucky to have had my first date with someone who was not an egomaniac who talked about himself 24/7. After leaving Don Henricos, we found some spare time to talk at the Sunken Garden overlooking the UP Fair.

His stories gave me a glimpse of who he was as a person. I could tell he loved his family very much. We talked mostly about his grandparents. Some might say those aren't the usual topics for a date. But I enjoyed them nonetheless.

The next day was a Sunday, and he asked me if we could go to Mass together. He happened to have the most wonderful voice, and he wasn't like most guys who were afraid to sing (with feelings!) at church.

There were other surprises after that. I learned that we both applied at the same school organization when we were still freshmen. And that he had been "looking" at me whenever we would bump into each other around the campus.

His younger brother was also my batchmate at Kalai (UP's dorm for freshmen). Hah! There were so many opportunities for us to get to know each other. Why only now, I asked myself. But I guess everything happens in God's time...

Wonderful guy

After that, we began seeing each other every day. He'd pick me up after my class, and the more time I spent with him, the more I got to see what a truly wonderful guy he was.

I will never forget the time he gave me Red Ribbon goodies for no reason at all. And he brings my stuff (When you really know me, you'd see how much stuff I carry!) without ever complaining. I never even have to ask him to pass a table napkin, because he has this unique gift of reading my mind.

Ten days after our first date, he asked me if I could be his girlfriend. I found myself dumbfounded. I sorted out my feelings. I knew I liked this guy, and I saw myself having a relationship with him. The question, however, was if I was ready to have that relationship now.

But I also knew I was very lucky to have found someone like him, and that I would be the most stupid person in the universe if I let him go. So I let my heart decide. A big yes was the answer.

Now, I find myself falling in love with this guy every day as I get to know him more. Up to now, I continue to discover things about him, and I continue to love him for those things and for the person that he is.

Some might say we had a whirlwind courtship. Is it really possible to fall in love with someone after only knowing him for 10 days? Well, if you asked me that question a couple of years back, I would have answered, "No way!"

But then, life has a way of changing even the worst cynics. I fell in love with him in 10 days, and I still fall in love with him even now.

RAGNAR and Abi

Best friends for now

By Abigail Tud

RAGNAR and I met when we were in high school. I kicked a half-empty water bottle across the classroom, he picked it up and threw it away. Since then, we've been best friends, managing to stay close despite attending different colleges.

Genuine, dependable people are hard to find, but Ragnar has managed to come through for me in spite of all the tough problems he has had to face (like staying alone on a school night at a 7-11 when he was 14).

More importantly, I know I'll have a very hard time looking for another person who can pretend not to care if I laugh so hard that coffee starts spurting out my nose, or if I make him wait six hours in line for a plane ticket, or if I kick a soccer ball straight into his nuts.

So, because my parents insist on me waiting till I graduate to start a "proper" relationship, we remain what we've been for the past six years: best friends.

And even if fate works out something else for the both of us, we're sure we'll stay that way. I think that's just as good as having a "real" boyfriend, don't you agree?

We loved the calendar Cheryl Polican made for her boyfriend as a Christmas gift last 2003. She said, "Each month contains pictures—some cut into small pieces and painstakingly pasted—that remind us of some of the memories we've shared together."

KEN and Cheryl

FRANCIS and Yohhei

Rocking my world

By Francis Enrique

When I met Yohhei, a Japanese, my world literally rocked!

We became friends at the gym after some badminton games together. His effort to get to really know Filipino culture is way too admirable for somebody who came from a First World country.

And because I also love adventure and I like surprising myself with new stuff, I too embraced some aspects of Japanese living.

Through his help, I was able to go to Japan last year and learn more about their history and culture. I came to respect their diligence at work, their art, cuisine, healthy lifestyles and their desire to help and touch people's lives.

I have known him only for a short time, yet I have a feeling we are old souls who were connected in the past and are reconnected now. We can feel things for each other, and our friendship grows stronger each day.

It's a little miracle that two people from different parts of the globe can connect this way. I can only thank God for that.

ELNEL with friends

The invitation

By Elnel Andrew Roque

I REALLY wanted to invite you to that wedding. So I invited you, knowing you'd never do it. You said "yes," and it was one of the happiest moments of my life.

Now, when you are near, I can't stop looking at you. I like your missed calls, your texts, your messages, your company, your hands, your feet, your fingernails, your toenails, your hair, your cheeks, your lips, your eyes, your nose, your ears, your eyebrows, your smile.

I can't wait to see another wedding again. So that I can invite you and feel my missing rib again. I can't wait until the next one, and the next, and the next one after that.

And maybe, just maybe, you'd feel the same way I do.

I love you.

Much more than puppy love

By Roselle Paras

fun
Feb 14
happy John day
bond
PRIZED PIC

ROSELLE and John

I MET my first love when I was just 14, and last February 14, we spent our 9th Valentine's Day together.

Sometimes, even I am amazed that I've spent almost half my lifetime loving my childhood sweetheart.

We met in the summer of April 1996, at a time when falling in love was the farthest thing from my mind. After all, I had just turned 14.

In my usual big white shirt and shiny Sketchers, I entered a music store eager to enroll for guitar lessons. What was running through my mind at the time was, at the end of my lessons, I would be better at playing the guitar than my brother.

But when I looked up, I found myself looking eye to eye with a tall, long-haired guy who was holding an electric guitar.

Time seemed to stop, and for the first time in my life, I felt butterflies in my stomach. But it was more than just that. Sure, I've had crushes before, but I knew this was different. This time, it was much more than that.

Both of us had stopped what we were doing. I was suddenly glued to that spot, just staring back at him. And he had stopped playing.

Something passed between us. To this day, it's hard for me to describe it without being mushy.

But nine years after that moment, the image of us just staring at each other from across the store is so clear in my mind that it could've happened yesterday.

The following days seemed to pass by so fast. I found myself looking forward to school because I knew he would be there. One time, I was sick and had to stay at home. Come recess time, he called me up, worried. A few hours later, he sheepishly stood outside our gate. *"Ayoko na rin pumasok. Wala naman buhay sa* school *pag wala ka,"* he said.

I have never forgotten what he said to me that day.

Amazing moments

It was four months after our eyes met, while he was walking me home, that I said 'yes' to him. As if on cue, the whole city had a blackout, and we were suddenly alone on the street with only the stars above us. It seemed the heavens were conspiring to make that night memorable. And so on August 28, 1996, John Machate became my first, and so far only, boyfriend.

We've had so many amazing moments together that it's hard to pick just one or two powerfully beautiful memories

We went through the 'you and me against the world' phase, too.

Everyone from our parents to our teachers and friends were against the relationship. Not only because we were both very young, but because we were total opposites. I was a very good student and was active in school. He, on the other hand, was branded as a Manila boy who smoked.

I came from a loving family and lived a sheltered life. He came from a broken family and had discovered early on in his young life that his father had other wives and children. He was stereotyped as a troubled kid.

And of course, he was. How could he not be troubled after going through such traumatic events? Meeting his father's other children, his mom leaving him and his siblings to work abroad, he transfers from one place and one *tita* to another... His traumas were countless. But that's another story.

Heartbreaking

Looking back, I now understand why the people around me were so concerned. But I'm also sure that when they look back, they too would now understand it was more than just a case of puppy love. Now, they see how much we really love each other.

A year after we met, he and his family were to move back to Manila. That was one of the most heartbreaking moments in my young life. I remember how their plane was about to leave and his mom was panicking inside the airport, calling him to hurry up.

But he stood there with me as if nothing else was happening. He opened my goodbye gift, saw the little doll inside wearing a necklace with my name on it, took it out and cried.

Later that day, his mom called me to say that during the flight, John's tears never stopped falling. And beside him was my doll with a seatbelt around it.

John and I have been through so much. Yes, we've had our share of breakups and fights.

But for us, those experiences only served to make our bond stronger. Now, when we reminisce about them, we just laugh. We have learned to adjust to each other's differences.

Every day we still learn something new about each other. And every day I love him more and more.

Ma. Charity Lejano shaved with us her amazing love story and a collage of photos of her family.

Will of heart

By Aurie Anden

You have created within me a
space only your heart can fit into
Such that no one will be able to
touch my life, in the same exact manner.
I am amazed at the comfort of our
hands together, content with the sacredness
of your simple companionship.
You have opened my life to a need I did not
know existed.
Such that there is desire, always, to be with you.
We must temper our passions,
however,
in order to grow. For we are yet,
two people of two different worlds
holding different lives, but are,
Inevitably entwined, by will of God,
by will of heart.

Friends and lovers

By Rizza Castillo

IT WAS March 3, 2001 when I walked into Makati Shangri-La dressed in a man's suit, ready to meet my *barkada* to enjoy our High School Graduation Ball.

In the hotel lobby, I greeted my friends who were waiting for us latecomers when suddenly this dashing young man stood up and extended his hand to greet me. His name was Boni. He was very polite and quite stiff. He turned out to be the date of my friend.

One month later, we both found ourselves in a common friend's debut. It was here that I first took serious notice of him. He looked really good, and I developed a crush in him. We started talking to each other, arguing about whether "Survivor 2" was a hoax, since that wild boar came out of nowhere. We found out we were both stubborn since no one gave in. Well, that got us texting each other after the party.

One week after that, our *barkada* and his friends went swimming. We had a great time hanging out. Then he started playing the guitar, and he was just absolutely adorable, playing different songs.

But this instantly changed because he called me a bully. I got pissed at him, and that made him worry. He eventually called me up and said he didn't mean it. He even paid me a compliment by telling me I was very different from all the girls he had met.

Easter Sunday, I was in Makati when my best friend texted me to say this guy had called me "*topak*." I was furious! How dare he call me that! I texted him angrily, and he called even though he was out with his friends just to apologize.

The next day, I found myself sick. But I also found myself being serenaded by him with "Tell Me," with a white long-stemmed rose as a way of saying he was sorry. We both knew that meant nothing since he did not want to have a girlfriend, at least not while in college. So we became good friends after that.

Throughout the summer, we would always go out, but with friends, of course. We became really close during that time, always kidding or arguing with each other. He even threw a 1.5-liter Coca-Cola bottle at me one afternoon because I was teasing him about a girl he didn't like. That was our way of making *lambing* to each other.

Strange feeling

I never realized my feelings for him until the last outing of the *barkada* for the summer when we went to Enchanted Kingdom. The whole day was just fun, fun, fun until we were having dinner at McDonald's. He was a bit tired, so he decided to leave early with a friend. I was sitting in a different table with my best friend when he kissed all the girls goodbye, except me.

I felt so different, so strange that I decided to talk to one of my other friends about it. Right there, under a full moon, I realized I was falling for him.

Since we were going to the same college, we constantly would bump into each other. We gave each other cards, chocolates and lollipops every chance we got. He would wait with me almost every afternoon for my *sundo* under a big shady tree in school, and we would talk and have little picnics. We got closer than ever that people started to notice.

I decided to invite him as my date to my high school friend's debut at Hotel InterContinental. That night, I was all glammed up in a nice olive green halter dress, and he in his gray suit. We were by the window in the ballroom, on the top floor, overlooking Glorietta 4, when he suddenly brought up the topic.

Apparently, one of our common friends in the party asked him if we were a couple. He then told me a lot of his friends were also asking the same question. He said he could no longer deny it, to me or to his friends, because he did love me.

Well, I also told him how I was feeling, and that evening ended with us becoming a couple. It may not have been the most romantic proposal, but that night was the most perfect night of my life.

We may not be the most perfect pair there is, but we know we are right for each other, despite the constant bickering and teasing. Our meeting in Makati Shangri-la was four years ago. Who knows where our beautiful relationship is headed as we graduate soon?

BONI and Rizza

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ROMINA and her destiny back in nursery

Destined to meet

By Romina Santayana

WHEN I was young, I never really believed in destiny. I felt destiny was just an idea people used to excuse themselves whenever they failed. I believed that whatever path we chose was the result of our own free will.

But that changed when I fell in love. It all started one night. There was a quarter moon and I was in my room reading these old letters from grade-school friends.

Then, I chanced upon my nursery class picture. Back then, we didn't care about class pictures. We weren't like high-school students who retouched their makeup, walked stiffly because they didn't want their hair messed up, and even sprayed perfume as if they would smell good in pictures!

All we knew at the time the photo was taken was, we girls had to sit in the front row and the boys had to stand behind us. Then we had to look at the photographer and say, "cheese!"

But I remembered this occasion most vividly because, when we assembled for the photo, I chose my chair and then suddenly my petty crush wanted to stay right behind me! So I ended up not smiling in the picture because I was really conscious.

I never thought somebody would actually like to stay behind me. I always knew I was a girl who was very different from the rest. I was more on the heavy side and I had extraordinary hair. My curls were afro! Most of the time, I was asked, "Why does your hair look like that?" Worse, I was called, "Boy! Boy!"

Then, a miracle. I got a call from my crush! I was so excited to tell him I found our nursery picture. I had always wanted to let him know who I was when I was young.

My heart was throbbing fast, my feet were getting cold, and my hands were shaking. I swiftly scanned the picture and looked at the boys' row. There he was!

"You are here!" I told him.

The story got even better. I saw another picture of us dancing. And guess what? We were partners!

Yes, we both had the same childhood beginnings. We separated ways when I entered an all-girls' private school and he went to an all boys' exclusive school.

But now, we are in the same university, in the same college, and with the same group of friends. More than that, we share a very special relationship. Destiny? What else could it be?

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DAD and mom

Her hero

By Ariane Rae Ramos

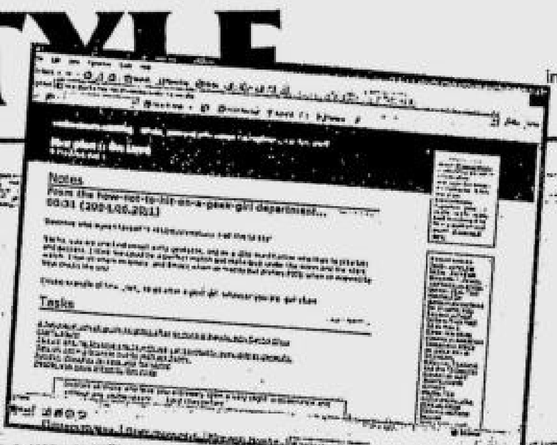
AS I was growing up, I would hear stories every now and then about how my parents fell in love with each another.

It all started one Friday afternoon when my mom and her co-teachers were sent to Carles to do a teaching demonstration. It was love at first sight for my father, but he was too shy to show what he felt for her. So he was often prodded by my grandfather to court my mom because my *lolo* felt they were so suited to each other.

One day my mom and some coworkers were assigned to do another demonstration at Higantes Island. To get to that place, you needed to ride a motorboat. My father, ever the gentleman, volunteered to be their tour guide.

While out at sea, their boat suddenly capsized even though it was manned by an experienced captain. Everybody then started swimming, except for my mom who didn't know how to.

Luckily for her, she managed to grab my father's arms, and my father rescued her. That's how my mom found her hero. A few months later, they were married and now have four unruly children who need lots of rescuing.



Notes

From the how-not-to-hit-on-a-geek-girl department...

Tasks

Cupid is a geek

By Dominique Cimafranca

ONE of the hallmarks of the stereotypical male computer nerd is his ineptitude with members of the opposite sex, especially those of the attractive kind. Most especially those of the attractive and intelligent kind. Just read one of the many strips of "Dilbert" which deals with the subject.

Cliched as the image may be, there's some truth to it. I should know. I am a stereotypical male computer nerd.

At one point, I wished out loud to my friends that I could meet a girl that came with an instruction manual. I meant it in jest, what with women being so complex and all. But apparently, there was such a girl—and no, she was not of the inflatable kind.

In doing advocacy work for Linux, I wrote a series of articles on prominent Linux personalities in the Philippines. One of the people I featured was Sacha Chua, a programming wunderkind who was very much in touch with the pulse of geekdom.

Sacha was into Linux, Emacs and wearable computing. Certainly she made good copy, and several people posted links to that article on my web site.

I conducted the interview via e-mail, so we didn't really get to meet. Nevertheless, she came across as very intelligent, very articulate and very personable in our e-mail exchanges.

SACHA and Dominique

Sacha also maintained a wiki—a sort of a blog—where she placed all her code and her essays. One of her entries was entitled "On Love," a tongue-in-cheek how-to to on courting geek girls, particularly Sacha Chua. Finally, a girl with an instruction manual. Was this the answer to my wish, I wondered.

No girly-girly stuff

Humorous as the tone was, the instruction manual was an earnest exposition of Sacha's views on courtship. At the top of the list was intelligent conversation that would increase her stock of knowledge. Getting to know her family was also important to her. Flowers, stuffed animals and other girly-girly stuff were a no-no.

The bar was set high, but it also gave a clear indication of what kind of person Sacha was. Was I interested? Absolutely!

Of course, I didn't start courting Sacha on the basis of that manual. Distance was a problem, as I was based in the South and was travelling all over. But we did strike up a friendship facilitated by e-mail. Through it, I learned of her other interests in books, quirky movies and puzzles.

We finally met when I moved to Manila. We would see each other from time to time. It helped greatly that we were both speakers at Linux seminars.

Sacha introduced me to her wonderful family. She also brought me into her circle of friends, something I deeply appreciated because finally I met people of like minds.

I realized we had something special when we reached that most intimate moment in a geek's life: after a dinner date, I asked her to set up computer for a demo that I was running the following day. She threw herself at the task, completing in half an hour what I knew would have taken me two hours. For a geek guy, well, that's nirvana.

Even though I now know Sacha far better than before, the how-to guide still serves as a handy reference. On occasion, I take a peek at it to gauge if I'm doing things right. Not too shabby, I must say.

Then again, you know you love someone when you know when to break her rules. She was positively giddy about the Tux stuffed toy I gave her.

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MARK Angelo B. Cacatian dreams of his ideal girl.

Love in the library

By Alistair Troy B. Lacsamana

CATALOG Card for Troy Lacsamana and Rossana Abuel

TL Lacsamana, Alistair Troy B.

143 True love / Alistair Troy B. Lacsamana

01 and Rossana Abuel.—1st edition-University

2000 of the Philippines: College of Engineering Library, 2000.

1825 p. : colored

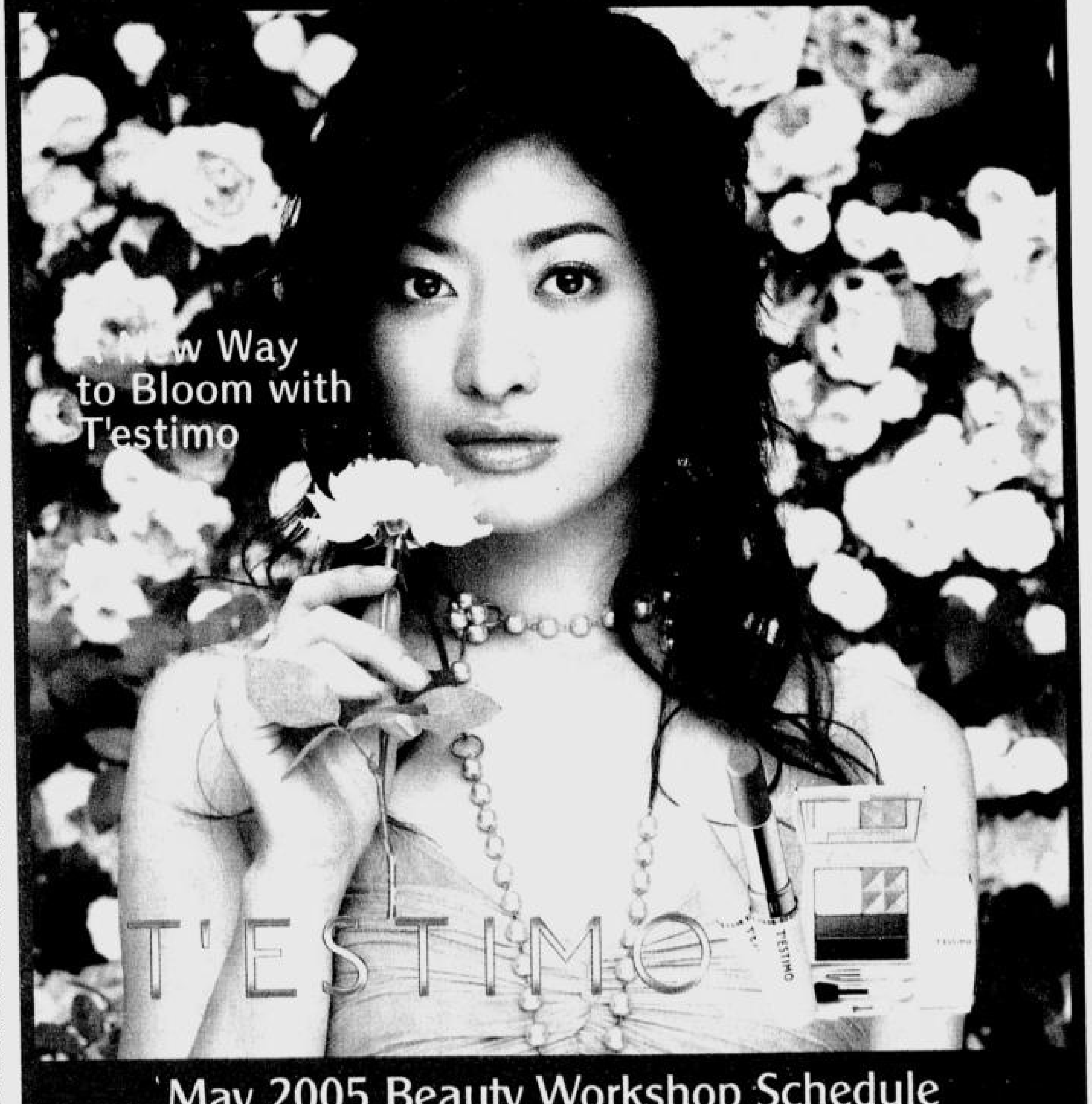
1. Love, True. 2. Love, Enduring. 3. Love, Unconditional.

ALISTAIR and Rossana

My love story with my girlfriend started when I met her at the College of Engineering Library in UP Diliman. I was a librarian at the college and she was a student assistant for summer 2000. Although there was this gap in our ages, it didn't hinder our love from blossoming. Now she's graduated from college and I'm still connected with the library. We're approaching our fifth year and we're planning to get married this December. The secret to our relationship, I think, is that we reaffirm our love for each other everyday.

From the desk of Carol Chua-Eximundo

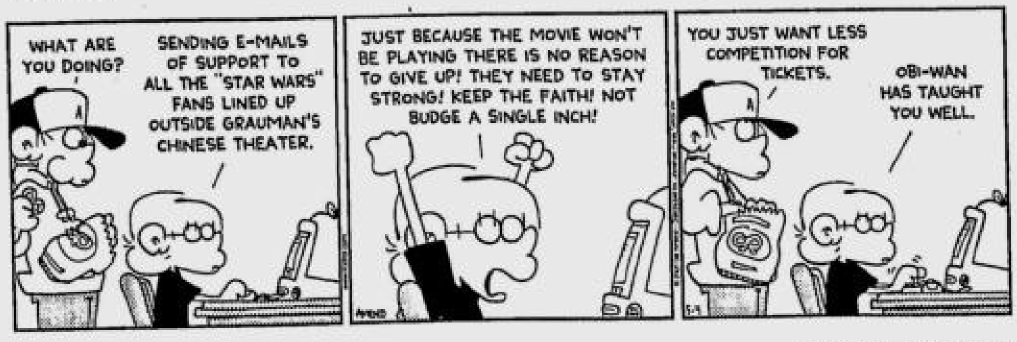
Kanebo FEEL YOUR BEAUTY
Rustan's



May 2005 Beauty Workshop Schedule
We will be joined by International Make-Up Artist
Mikiya Hirai
Rustan's Tower
May 1 and May 3 to 5
Rustan's Makati
May 6 to 8

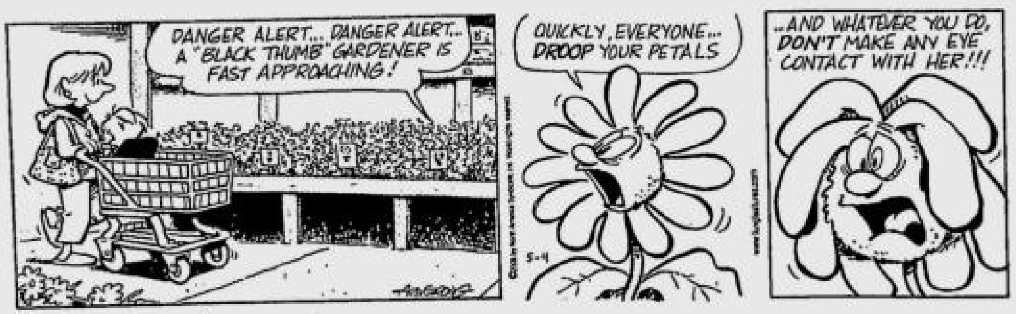
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SENDING E-MAILS OF SUPPORT TO ALL THE "STAR WARS" FANS LINED UP OUTSIDE GRAUMAN'S CHINESE THEATER.
JUST BECAUSE THE MOVIE WON'T BE PLAYING THERE IS NO REASON TO GIVE UP! THEY NEED TO STAY STRONG! KEEP THE FAITH! NOT BUDGE A SINGLE INCH!
YOU JUST WANT LESS COMPETITION FOR TICKETS.
OBI-WAN HAS TAUGHT YOU WELL.

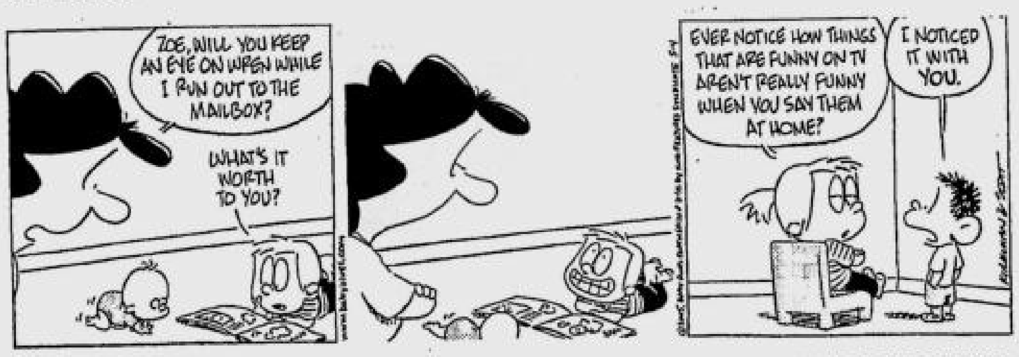
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


DANGER ALERT... DANGER ALERT... A "BLACK THUMB" GARDENER IS FAST APPROACHING!
QUICKLY, EVERYONE... DROOP YOUR PETALS
...AND WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T MAKE ANY EYE CONTACT WITH HER!!!

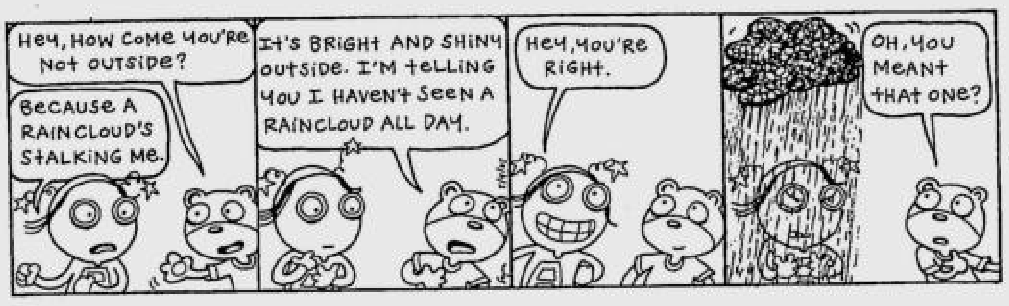
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


ZOE, WILL YOU KEEP AN EYE ON WREN WHILE I RUN OUT TO THE MAILBOX?
WHAT'S IT WORTH TO YOU?
EVER NOTICE HOW THINGS THAT ARE FUNNY ON TV AREN'T REALLY FUNNY WHEN YOU SAY THEM AT HOME?
I NOTICED IT WITH YOU.

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Hey, How Come You're Not outside?
Because A RAINCLOUD'S StALKING Me.
It's BRIGHt AND SHINY outside. I'M teLLING You I HAVEN't SeeN A RAINCLOUD ALL DAY.
Hey, You're RIGHt.
OH, You MeANt tHAt ONE?

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are warm-hearted and caring. It seems to be your destiny in life to pass on to others what you have learned. Despite your mild-mannered appearance, you are sought after for advice and guidance. Privately, you are stubborn. Nevertheless, you have a stability that nurtures others. Expect increased solitude this year in order to learn something important.
Birthdate of: Audrey Hepburn, actress; Ana Gasteyer, actress; Randy Travis, singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You might be shopping more than usual, because you are certainly concerned with your finances right now. Use caution when spending money today. It's hard to be objective.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You're very powerful right now because two planets are in your sign—the Sun and Venus. This helps you in dealing with others. It gives you an edge. (Call it luck.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You've been busy lately. Today is a good time to pull back a little and rest. If you have to work, work alone if you can. You need solitude.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Remember that this week is not a time to go it alone. Work with others. Form working partnerships. People can definitely benefit you now.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Because the Sun is at the very top of your chart, people cannot help but notice you. You are in the limelight. Keep this in mind before you speak and act. (Appearances are everything.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Your desire to expand your experience of the world is very strong now. Try to travel if you can. Do something that is different and out of the ordinary. Vary your routine.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Now is the time to dig through all kinds of shared possessions and things jointly held with others. Figure out what you want to keep and what you want to get rid of.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You can learn a lot about yourself through others now. That's because the Sun and Venus are opposite your sign. Think about your interactions with people.

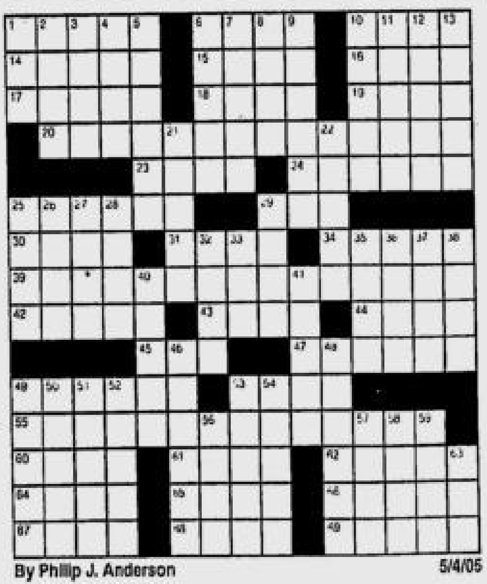
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Yours is a hardworking sign. (You party hard, too.) This week is a time for hard work. You can accomplish a tremendous amount!

CAPRICORN: (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You're feeling surprisingly playful and frisky lately. You might even want to pull some pranks or tease others. That's because you just want to please yourself right now. (That's OK.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): This is an excellent time to make your home look more attractive. It's also a good time for family discussions. Family members are cooperative.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Your efforts to study, read, write, sell, market or teach will be successful now. You strongly want to enlighten others. You have something to say!

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

5/4/05

ACROSS
1 Conspiracy group
6 Placid
10 Ms. Gardner and others
14 Small antelope
15 Locality
16 Teamster's rig
17 Boxing-like exercise
18 Tenant's expense
19 Burl on a tree
20 1972 Oscar winner and his role
23 Ms. Bombeck
24 Gary of "Air Force One"
25 Kickback cash
29 Forensic sampling
30 Writer Wister
31 Tableland
34 Hotel employees
39 1960 Oscar winner and his role
42 Kay the band leader
43 Aleutian island
44 Adolescent
45 Part of m.p.g.
47 Listless and weak
49 Dined in a restaurant
53 Son of Leah
55 1982 Oscar winner and his role
60 Romance lang.
61 Where Polo went
62 Frogs' kin
64 Track event
65 Dune material
66 Saginaw Bay's lake
67 Swarming bugs
68 Harbor craft
69 Incantation

DOWN
1 Collapsible bed
2 Part of U.A.E.
3 Coffin support
4 Eban of Israel
5 A Barrymore
6 Ricochet
7 Betel palm
8 Host after Carson
9 __ of honor
10 Questioned
11 Poisonous secretion
12 Iowa commune
13 Temptress
21 Fluid ounce fractions
22 Andean beast
25 '54-40 or fight' president
26 Not at home
27 Desires
28 As soon as
29 Zip about
32 Etc.'s cousin
33 Confirmed
35 Pot sweetener
36 News piece
37 Three in Berlin
38 Harmony, briefly
40 Giant of myth
41 Pear-shaped fruit
46 After all this time
48 11.11 percentages
49 Director Kurosawa
50 Powerful person
51 Make law
52 Leers at
53 Telling fibs
54 Holy smokes!
56 Jacob's sibling
57 Fasten, as buttons
58 Tortoise's rival
59 False god
63 NBC classic

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

L	A	B	S	■	R	U	N	G	■	P	R	I	D	E
U	R	A	L	■	E	M	I	R	■	R	A	D	O	N
S	I	T	E	■	G	A	M	E	■	O	I	L	E	D
T	A	H	I	T	I	■	H	E	L	P	L	E	S	S
■	■	■	G	I	N	A	■	D	E	E	■	■	■	■
R	E	D	H	E	A	D	S	■	O	R	G	A	N	S
U	R	I	■	■	L	I	L	A	■	L	A	M	I	A
S	E	V	E	N	D	E	A	D	L	Y	S	I	N	S
S	C	O	P	E	■	U	N	D	O	■	■	N	O	S
O	T	T	A	W	A	■	G	L	U	T	T	O	N	Y
■	■	■	C	D	S	■	E	N	O	S	■	■	■	■
T	O	M	F	O	O	L	S	■	G	R	E	E	N	E
O	D	I	U	M	■	O	O	Z	E	■	T	E	E	N
R	I	N	S	E	■	T	H	O	R	■	S	L	A	V
A	N	G	E	R	■	H	O	E	S	■	E	S	P	Y

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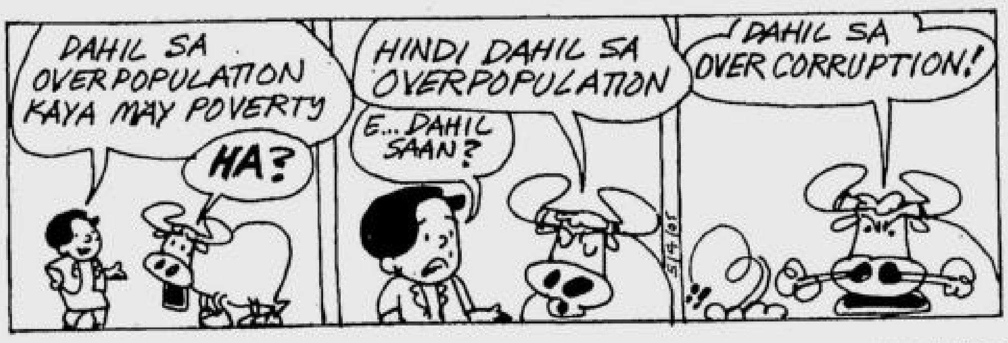
5/4/05

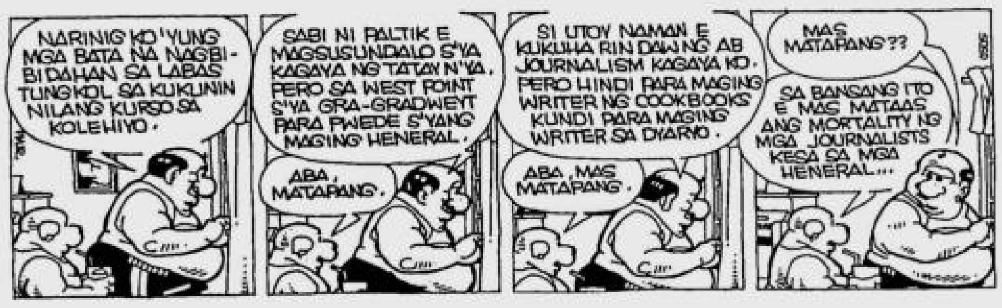
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


DAHIL SA OVERPOPULATION KAYA MAY POVERTY
HA?
HINDI DAHIL SA OVERPOPULATION
E... DAHIL SAAN?
DAHIL SA OVER CORRUPTION!

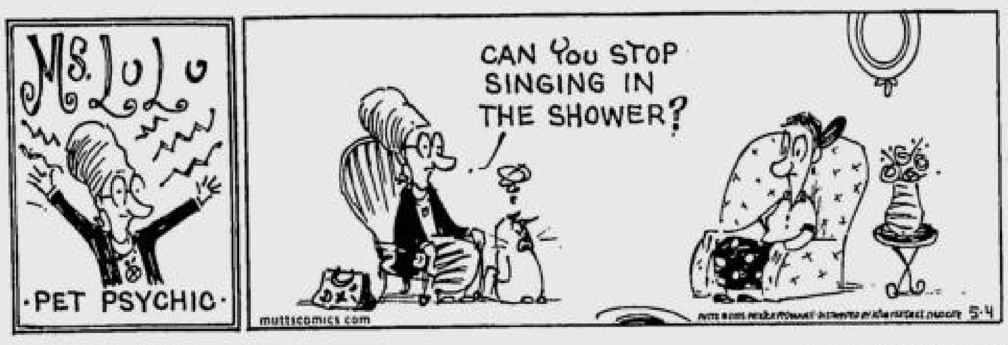
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


NARINIG KO 'YUNG MGA BATA NA NAGBIBIDAHAN SA LABAS TUNGKOL SA KUKUNIN NILANG KURSO SA KOLEHIYO.
SABI NI PALTIK E MAGSUSUNDALO S'YA KAGAYA NG TATAY N'YA, PERO SA WEST POINT S'YA GRA-GRADWEYT PARA PWEDE S'YANG MAGING HENERAL.
ABA, MATAPANG.
SI UTOY NAMAN E KUKUHA RIN DAW NG AB JOURNALISM KAGAYA KO. PERO HINDI PARA MAGING WRITER NG COOKBOOKS KUNDI PARA MAGING WRITER SA DYARYO.
ABA, MAS MATAPANG.
MAS MATAPANG??
SA BANSANG ITO E MAS MATAAS ANG MORTALITY NG MGA JOURNALISTS KESA SA MGA HENERAL...

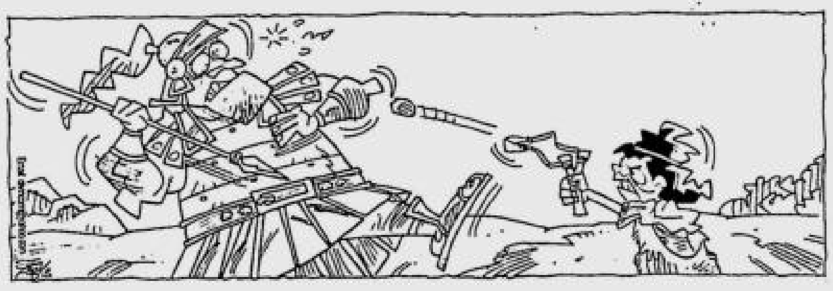
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


MS. LULU
PET PSYCHIC
CAN YOU STOP SINGING IN THE SHOWER?
muttscomics.com

DIVINE COMEDY

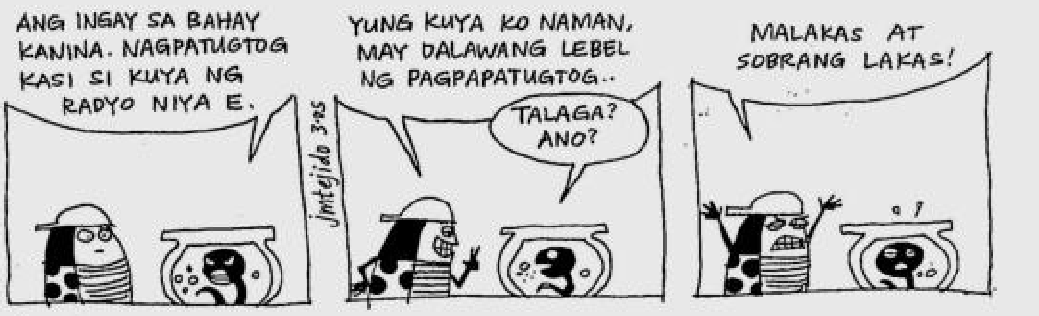
BY STEVEN PABALINAS



BECAUSE OF TOO MUCH EXCITEMENT, GOLIATH HAD A HEART ATTACK JUST SECONDS BEFORE DAVID'S STONE HIT HIM

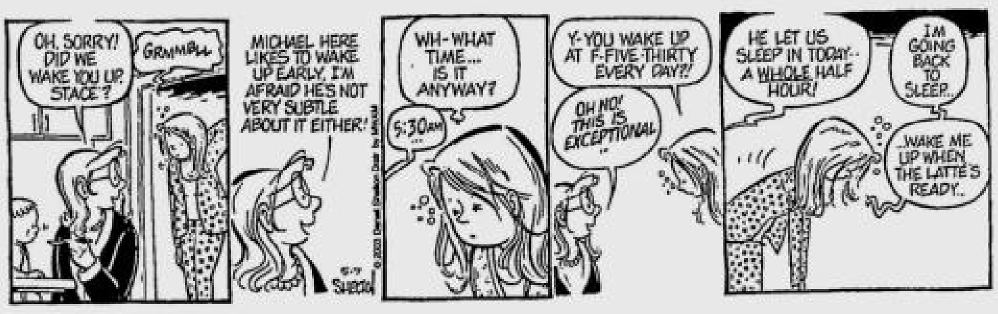
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ANG INGAY SA BAHAY KANINA. NAGPATUGTOG KASI SI KUYA NG RADYO NIYA E.
jmtejido 3-05
YUNG KUYA KO NAMAN, MAY DALAWANG LEBEL NG PAGPAPATUGTOG..
TALAGA? ANO?
MALAKAS AT SOBRANG LAKAS!

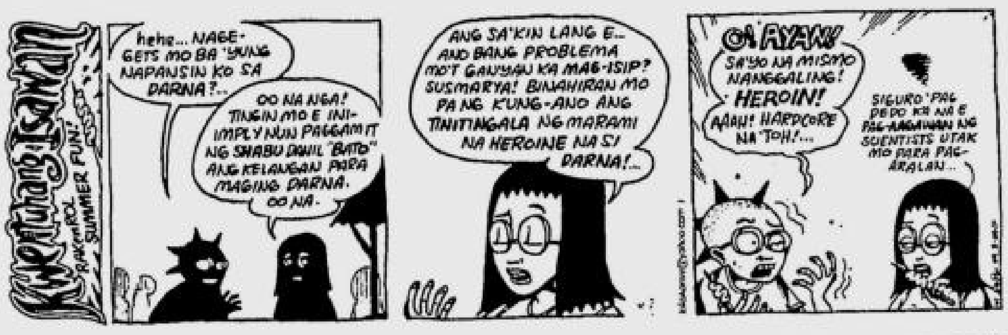
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


OH, SORRY! DID WE WAKE YOU UP, STACE?
GRMMBLL
MICHAEL HERE LIKES TO WAKE UP EARLY. I'M AFRAID HE'S NOT VERY SUBTLE ABOUT IT EITHER!
WH-WHAT TIME... IS IT ANYWAY?
5:30AM
Y-YOU WAKE UP AT F-FIVE-THIRTY EVERY DAY?!
OH NO! THIS IS EXCEPTIONAL
HE LET US SLEEP IN TODAY... A WHOLE HALF HOUR!
I'M GOING BACK TO SLEEP...
...WAKE ME UP WHEN THE LATTE'S READY..

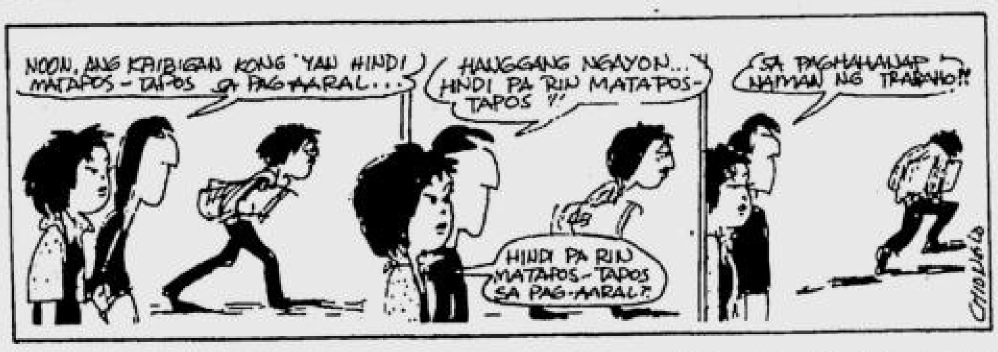
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


SUMMER FUN!
hehe... NAGEGETS MO BA 'YUNG NAPANSIN KO SA DARNA?..
OO NA NGA! TINGIN MO E INI-IMPLY NUN PAGGAMIT NG SHABU DAHIL "BATO" ANG KELANGAN PARA MAGING DARNA. OO NA.
ANG SA'KIN LANG E... ANO BANG PROBLEMA MO'T GANYAN KA MAG-ISIP? SUSMARYA! BINAHIRAN MO PA NG KUNG-ANO ANG TINITINGALA NG MARAMI NA HEROINE NA SI DARNA!..
O AYAN!
SA'YO NA MISMO NANGGALING! HEROIN! AAAH! HARDCORE NA 'TOH!...
SIGURO 'PAG PEDO KA NA E PAG-AAGAWAN NG SCIENTISTS UTAK MO PARA PAG-ARALAN...

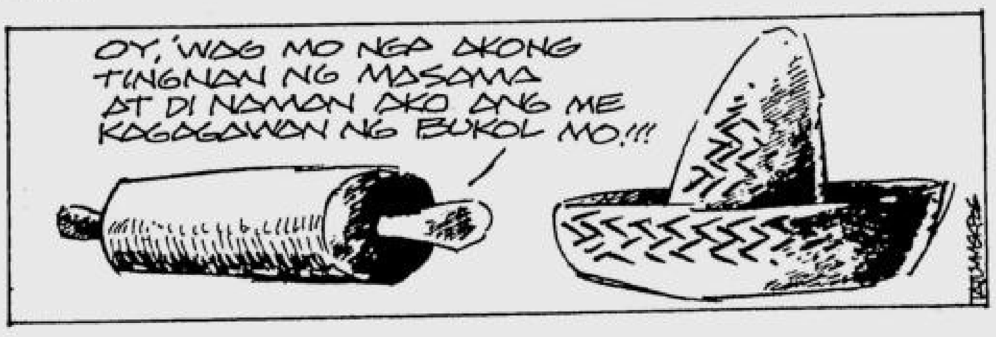
LOVEKNOTS

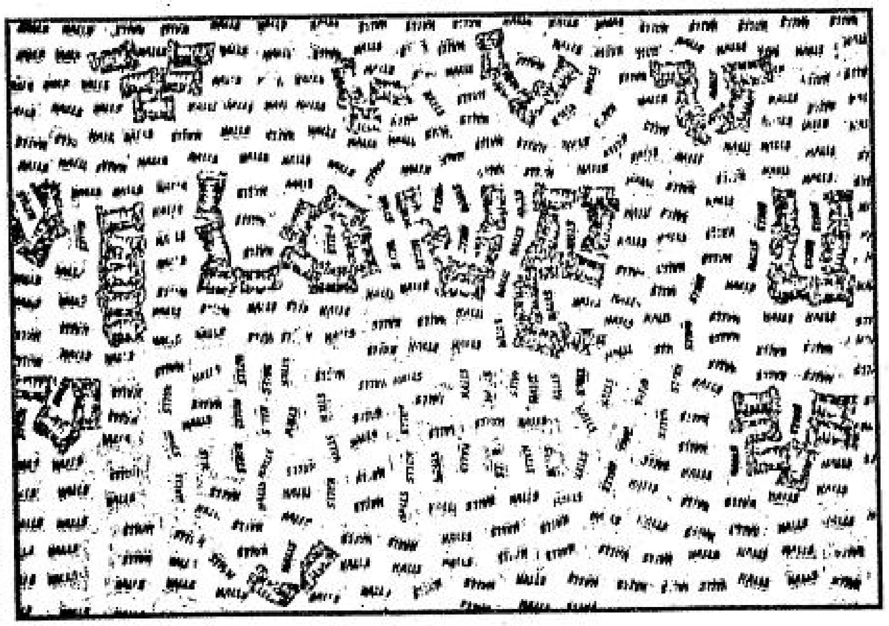
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


NOON, ANG KAIBIGAN KONG 'YAN HINDI MATAPOS-TAPOS SA PAG-AARAL...
HANGGANG NGAYON... HINDI PA RIN MATAPOS-TAPOS !!
HINDI PA RIN MATAPOS-TAPOS SA PAG-AARAL?
SA PAGHAHANAP NAMAN NG TRABAHO!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


OY, 'WAG MO NGA AKONG TINGNAN NG MASAMA AT DI NAMAN AKO ANG ME KAGAGAWAN NG BUKOL MO!!!



Cool proposal

By Ganns Deen

ODDLY enough, I've come up with spectacular proposals for everyone but myself!

I met Catherine in July 1998. From any angle, we weren't cool at all: I was an English instructor and she was a Psychology professor. To increase the dork factor, we found out on our first date a mutual love for all things Debbie Gibson. Also, we both wore glasses, and, well, we did nothing much on our dates but read.

Five years passed quickly as we grew to love each other. One day I decided to propose.

It wasn't that cool. Knowing she liked the fragrance, I put my plan into action and bought her a brand-new bottle of Kenzo Flower perfume. I opened the box at its bottom and tied the ring to the slender bottle with a silver string. Gift-wrapping the box, I hid it in my coat pocket and took her out to dinner at Mi Piace, this great restaurant at the Manila Peninsula.

After dinner, I got down on one knee and gave her the box to open as I read her a poem I wrote.

She opened the gift but didn't open the box! Frustrated, I took the box myself and opened it, taking out the ring and asking her to be my wife.

Thankfully, she accepted, but she has never let me forget that we weren't cool, even after the complimentary chocolates (you'd think chocolates would be enough).

So, last Valentine's, I decided to finally give her something literally "sweet" and "cool." I glued together more than 300 pieces of Halls Honey Lemon, Raspberry, and IceMint candies on an illustration board to spell out, "I Love U, Cathy." It took my 7-year-old cousin and me the whole day to make it with Elmer's Glue, but it was worth it.

Cathy was pleasantly surprised, and really touched.

The author runs Perfect-Proposals.com and has helped many men achieve the proposal of their girlfriends' dreams.

Opposites attract

By Ina Alleco R. Silverio

I FIRST became aware of Kim through his posts in an e-group of media writers and liaison staff. The topics discussed were often heavy—politics, the economy and other issues affecting the country.

Kim, as far as I knew, was a physics teacher in UP Diliman and a member of Agham, an organization of patriotic scientists. He seldom posted anything personal. Mostly he'd forward essays on Einstein or reports on new discoveries in physics, or how the power industry in the country should be nationalized.

Sometimes, however, the members would veer a little off-course and post lighter entries. One time, I posted a story about the toys I had when I was growing up, and how I lost most of them when my dad gave them away to the kids in the squatter community near where we lived when I was in high school.

I came home one afternoon to find my bed empty. Little Anne was gone, Big Anne was gone, Mango the yellow mouse was gone, the rest of my dolls and stuffed toys had disappeared. I've had them since I was three, so imagine my devastation.

At the time I wrote the story, however, I said I had more or less gotten over the trauma over losing my first and oldest friends, and that all I wanted now was a stuffed toy chicken. *"Matabang maputing manok na may matambok na pulang palong,"* was how I described it, if I remember correctly.

I really didn't expect anyone to react to my post. But the next time I checked my e-mail, there was Kim's response: *"Nagtatahi si Mama ng* stuffed toys..."

I suppose that's where it all started. With an e-mail about a chicken. And the rest is, well, not history, but comedy. With a lot of love, activism, and teabags thrown in.

Reasons to marry

Three years ago, I wrote this in my journal after watching "Bridget Jones's Diary" for the 11th time:

If I were to get married, it would be for the following reasons in no particular order, but am writing them as they occur to me just now: (1) I want someone to massage my feet every night; (2) I don't know how to cook so it would be great to have someone cook for me on a regular basis; (3) Sometimes I fall asleep during movies and I need someone to tell me about the parts I missed; (4) I need someone to help me bathe my dog, Poofy; (5) It would be great to have someone who is almost always completely on my side, or at least who would love me even when I'm being a rotten brat; (6) I want a comfortable lap or sturdy shoulder to lay my head against while watching TV or looking for a falling star; (7) When I eat, I get full easily and often leave a portion of the plate uneaten, so I need someone to finish my food for me; (8) Waking up in the morning for work is often an ordeal, so I need someone who's more compelling than three alarm clocks sounding off at the same time; (9) My mom doesn't have a son, and it would be nice for her to have one; and (10) I've already met the man I want to be with for the rest of my life.

Differences

Yes, I've already met the man I want to be with for the rest of my life.

There are, of course, differences between us. He believes in simplicity, in starkness. He doesn't need—much less want—material clutter in his life. He has 20 pieces of clothes, two pairs of shoes, a beat-up bag. Even his clothes are simple, ordinary, threadbare and faded.

INA and Kim

He doesn't require much to make him happy, as he finds happiness in ideas, in conversations with others about their views of the world, science and nature, history and art, politics and economics. He can trace the roots of socialism in history and the square roots of numerals with, say, 16 digits. He has the patience of a nanny and the maturity of a genuine diplomat.

Me? I like seeing my closet full (everything is *ukay-ukay*-bought, for sure, but clothes all the same). I like my books, my toys, my Magic 8-Ball, the fun but essentially useless and unimportant things that gather dust in my room. Things that only become important because I attach importance to them.

As for politics, it gives me a headache, makes me angry enough to want to smash windows. Discussions on the economy move me to despair and drive me to tears of anger and outrage against the exploiters and the thieves in government and the private sector.

I am impatient, hotheaded and a brat.

We're a lot different, but we're also a lot alike. Inside, at least. Whenever we argue, it is never a competition as to who is right or wrong, but rather a process to arrive at an agreement or a compromise.

He is my best friend, and I am blown away by his humanity.

Twins

By Irene Jacobe

WE were two very different people who grew up in two different worlds. One wished she had a twin, the other had a twin but died at birth. One grew up in Japan, while the other was locally oriented. One was always afraid of breaking the rules, the other was a non-conformist.

Our paths first crossed back in 2001. It was in an animé event. I was there as an artist for our booth where I did body paintings. He was there as a participant—a costume player, to be more exact.

I was going around the venue to enjoy the colorful costumes when this boy who was wearing a Hiei (a.k.a. Vincent of "Ghost Fighter") costume caught my attention. I approached him and asked if he already had a black dragon painted around his arms.

Maybe I could paint one on him, I said. But he replied that he already had a henna tattoo. Undaunted, I asked if he had a third eye instead. He said he had none, so I told him I'd paint one on him for free if he went to our booth.

IRENE (right) and her "twin"

Unfortunately, he got lost in the crowd while he was following me on my way to our booth. When I turned around, he was nowhere to be found.

Little did I know that he dropped by our booth later that afternoon to look for me, except I wasn't around. I was going out with someone else that time and he had his own. At the end of that day, I told myself that someday our paths would meet again.

Total strangers

Years passed, I forgot his name, and I couldn't even remember his face.

In August 2004, I went to this certain gathering to present a number with my band. And he was there! But at first we didn't recognize each other.

My hair was longer this time, I was more cheerful, and I wasn't going out with anyone. He was taller, looked more well-built, and his hair was colored. We were total strangers to each other.

But a common friend introduced us to each other, and this time, it was he who approached me to ask for my number. I was single, he wasn't going out with anyone, too, and we both came from a bad relationship. But still we failed to recall each other.

He started calling me a few weeks after that. It was in one of our small chit-chats that we realized we had met before.

Now, I'm proud to say we're very much in love with each other. I think he is the best boyfriend I've ever had. He says I'm the best girl he's ever had!

Now, we do body painting together during events, and the part I enjoy the most is when we attend animé conventions and costume-play together.

Turned out my love had a female twin who died at birth. I have always thought it's cool to have a twin. Now, it seems like everything is complete. He has found his long-lost twin, and I've found mine.

Sealed with an accidental kiss

By Ivy Hayagan

SHE was a ballerina. He was part of the circus. Her home was way south. He was from the north.

She lives an average life. He lives an adequate one. She's very clean. He's tried the grubby stuff.

And they're together? Yes.

That's Uly and Ivy. Us.

We simply started out as friends. Well, friends with a secret crush on each other. But because of the power of "*tipid*" texts and hours on the phone, then "*sine*" *dates*, a memorable Kris Kringle and a magical "accidental kiss" while watching "Mano Po 1," we officially became "hunnies" last December 30, 2002.

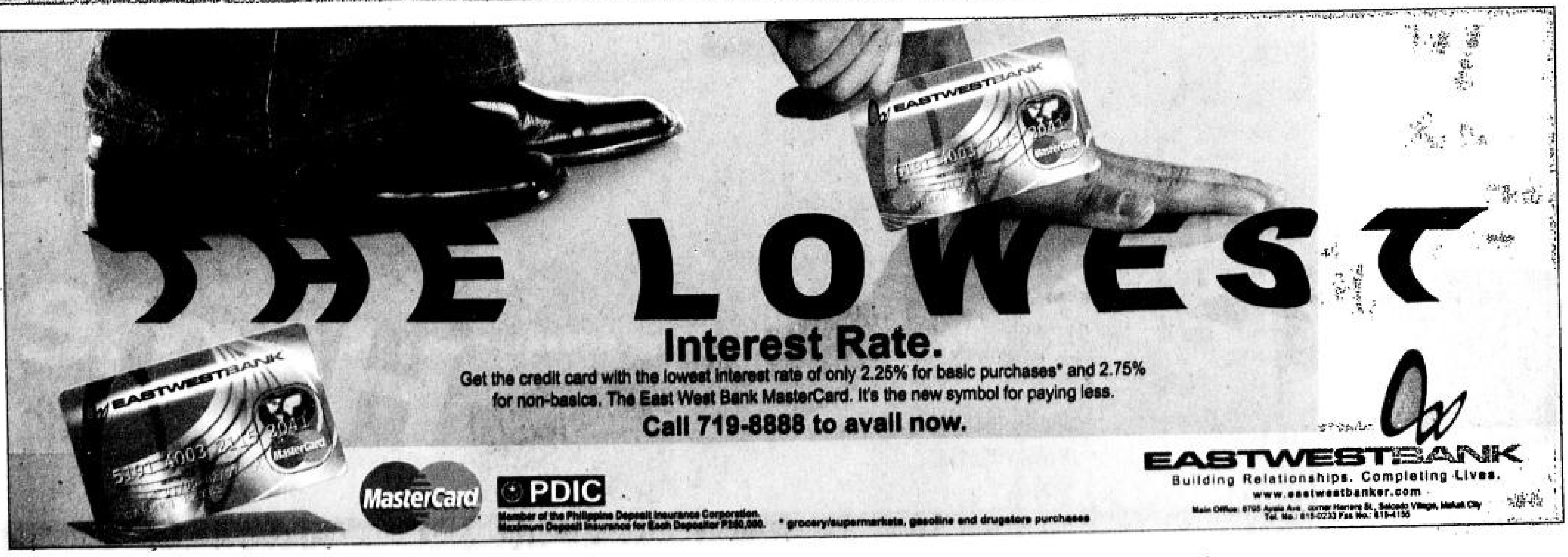
We've learned a lot from each other. I've became less materialistic and more appreciative of simple things. Uly has learned to pray again, while I laugh authentically again. Uly does not do the "dirty" stuff anymore, and I know how to trust again.

Uly now knows how to stick to one. In other words, we've became better people.

ULY and Ivy

We continuously live our adventure of finding out more about each other. We still enjoy the cheap dates, the movies, the surprises, the Wednesday Baclaran novena, the challenges, the good times and even the bad times, the jokes, the "selosan" blues, the mushy senti moments—the fact that we have each other.

Uly and I believe in miracles. We love, care, understand and dream in the face of uncertainties.



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Coming home

By Jay Beltran

LIKE AN orphan seeking shelter, I walked and wandered, looking for a place to stay, a place to call my home.

JILL and Jay

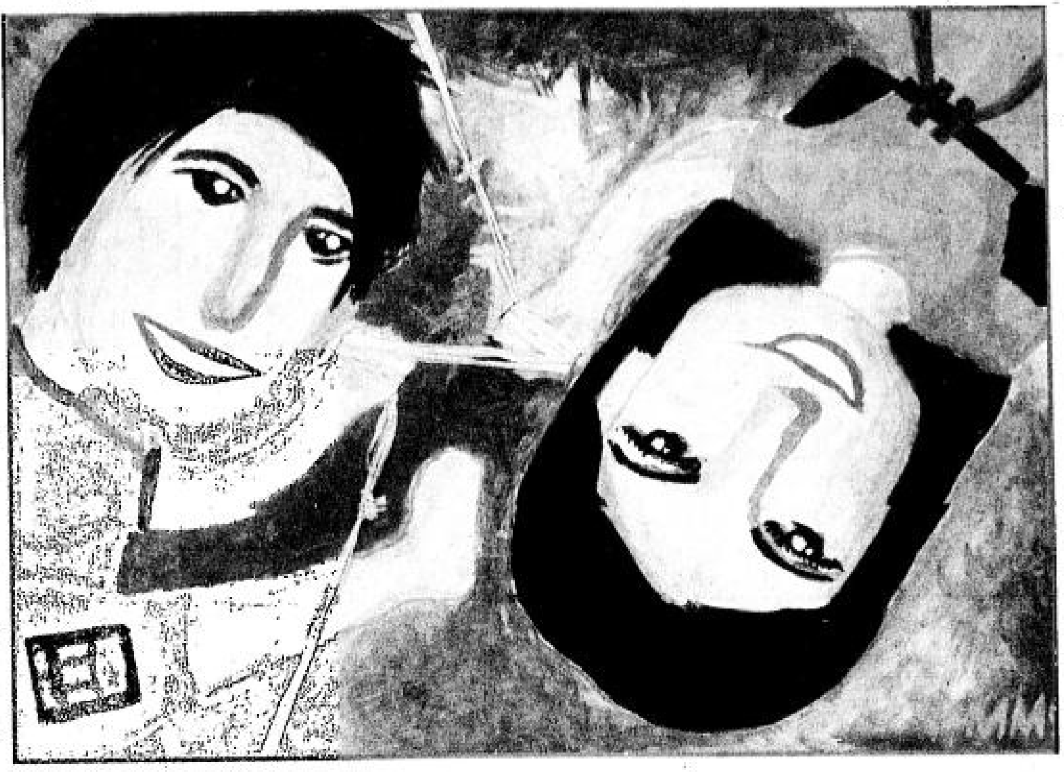
Through endless dark, narrow alleyways, in the city and under the bridge I spent my cold nights holding, embracing myself.

I walked and walked, at times losing all hope I'd ever find that place, but the morning sun would always remind me to walk again, and when the day came to an end, when the sun had and the lights had gone out, my tired restless body and soul would feel the emptiness again.

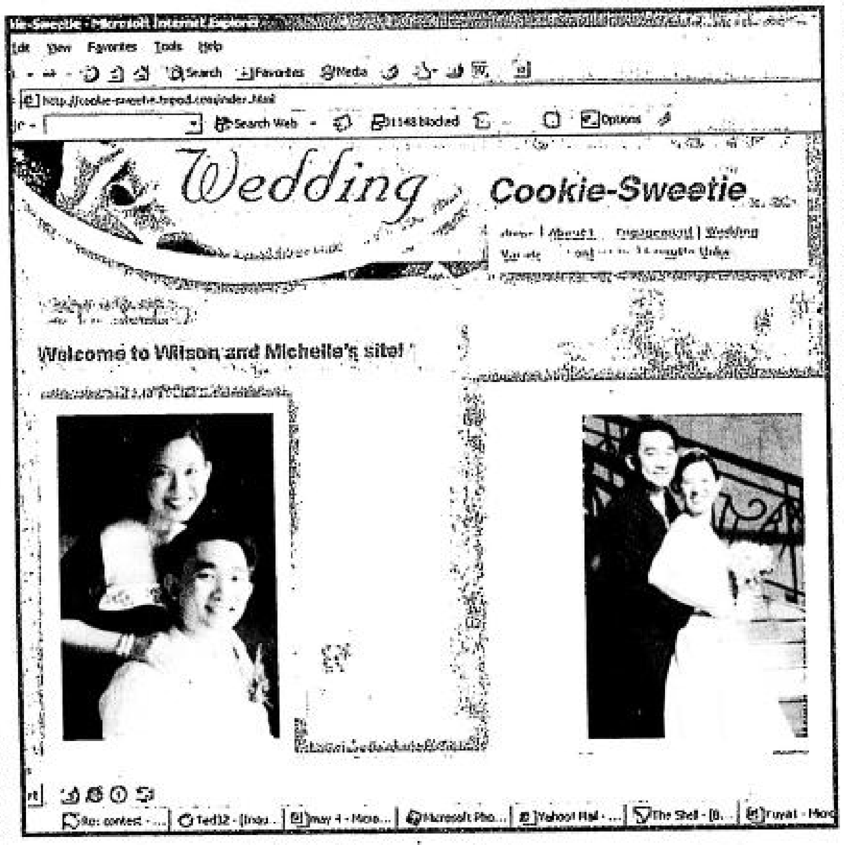
Some days, some nights, someone will take me in, offer a loving embrace that told me you I was home at last—a blanket of warm love that would soon fade and throw me out of the door.

Until, at last, your hand caught mine, and gently you showed me the way in. You whispered into my ear and said, "I'll never let you go." You welcomed me with a warm embrace and led me to your heart, a place I could finally call my home.

At last! No one's going anywhere this time...



From the drawing board of Michael Domingo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'Maraming dahilan, pero ang dahilan ko ay ikaw'

By Marian Hernandez

Yung dulo ng nisnis mong pantalon, sumasayad na naman sa lupa, sinta. Humahalik sa suka at alikabok ng Pasay. Ayokong nadudumihan ka, ni ang pantalon mo o kamiseta.

Kung hindi mo dadamputin ang pantalon mo sa tuhuran, ako ang gagawa niyan. Pang-ilang baybay na nga ba natin 'to sa gilid ng Edsa? Sanlibong crispy fries at tasa ng gravy na yata ang nakalilipas. Mainit ang panahon at masukal ang daan, pero ang napapansin ko ay ang tagaktak ng aspi-aspileng pawis sa noo mo't pagdulas-dulas ng aking palad sa pasmado mong kamay.

Napansin ko ang sikat ng araw sa sentido mo at kung paano niya patuluin ang pawis sa hibla-hiblang buhok ng iyong kilay. Maraming araw na rin tayong nanumbalik sa ganitong yugto. Ngunit hindi ako nagsasawa sa nag-aagaw puti at itim na sementong tinatapik ng ating mga sapatos, para bang tayo'y nagsasayaw sa musikang tayo lamang ang nakaririnig.

Kakain tayo mamaya sa kung saan may maki o pansit o siomai. Magtatagpo ang ating mga kamay sa panalangin. Nakayuko nang taimtim habang ang paroo't-parito ng mga tao sa paligid ay pupuna sa ating mumunting katahimikan.

Dama ko ang pakikinig mo sa mga salitang binibitiwan ko. Sapat nang kasalo ka sa pagdarasal, mahal, kahit hindi na malasap ang siomai sa hapag. Kapag taimtim tayo sa piling ng Panginoon, hindi ako mapakali't makapaghintay sa araw na Siya mismo ang tatahi sa ating dalawa.

Pero sa ngayong hindi pa tayo sumasayaw sa tunog ng kampana at kaluskos ng pakpak ng mga kalapati, ipagkakasiya ko ang sarili sa eksenang ating kinabibilangan ngayon. Kahit pa pagkain lang ito ng tanghalian sa isang hapong namumukadkad ang araw.

Ikaw ang nagturo sa aking ipitin ang magkayapos na kahoy sa gitna ng aking ngipin at bigla-biglang hilahin ito para mas sakto ang paghihiwalay ng dalawang stik. Para maiwasan ang mga salubsob na maaaring sumingit sa balat ko habang chinochopsticks ko ang ating paborito.

Ngiti at biro

Alam mo, ang sarap mo panoorin kahit ano pa ang ginagawa mo. Kahit yung maingat mong paghalo sa wasabi at Kikkoman. O yung pag-balanse mo ng hipon sa pagitan ng chopsticks, mula sawsawan hanggang sa bibig na bahagyang nakaawang.

Kahit paulit-ulit nating harapin ang ungol at hinagpis ng siyudad Pasay, alam kong susukob lang ako sa mga ngiti at biro mong tayo lang ang nakakaintindi. Alam kong sa ganon lang, nagsasaparaiso na ang dati'y abuhin at magulong mundo ng siyudad.

Hindi ko mabilang ang mga araw na binulungan ko ang Diyos para alagaan ka higit pa sa makakayanan kong gawin. Ikaw ang nagturo sa akin na hindi sapat ang pag-ibig lang. Ngunit hindi rin masama na umapaw ito. Tulad ng pagapaw nito sa ating mga labi, daliri, balat, titig, ugat, salita at ngiti.

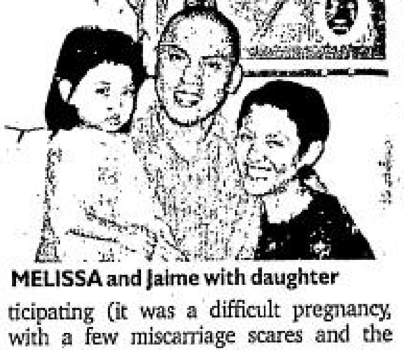
Ikaw lang ang nakatagpo sa tunay na ako. At hindi ka umatras o nangahas lumayo, lalo ka pa ngang lumapit para tignan pa ako nang malinaw, sinta. Mas malinaw sa inakala mo'y malinaw nang pagkilala mo sa akin.

Ikaw ang nakakaalam ng bawa't hibla ng aking pagkatao, dahil sa'yo, hindi ako natatakot. Hindi ko lang ramdam ang pagmamahal, alam ko pa ito. Alam na alam. Kilalang-kilala. Tulad ng pagkilala ko sa mga kakulangan mong hindi bumabawas sa'yo, bagkus lalo pang dumaragdag sa iyong kagandahan.

Sa iyong pagsusubok na mapabuti ang iyong sarili para sa akin, lalo kong inaasam yapusin ang natitirang pagkamusmos diyan sa loob mo. Para bang sinasabing hindi mo kailangan maging perpekto. Sasamahan kita. Magkasalo tayong babaybay, hindi lang ng Edsa, kundi pati ang mga susunod pang lakbayin ng ating pagsasama.

Dream wedding

By Melissa Alfonso-Cruz


MELISSA and Jaime with daughter

I DIDN'T get the dream wedding I wanted. Not even close.

But the reality of my marriage, despite its inauspicious beginnings, is more than I had ever hoped for. I'm not saying it's perfect—after all, what is?—but in this life, I could not have asked for a better partner than Jaime to spend the rest of my days with.

Do we disagree and fight? Sure, with just as much fire and passion as the next couple. Does he have annoying little habits I could do better without, and vice versa? Hell, yes. Do we need time off from each other every now and then? You bet.

But to lose him completely would be like dying, and I cannot imagine a life on this earth without him by my side.

My husband and I were wed in City Hall one sweltering August morning, in a ceremony that lasted perhaps 20 minutes, including the picture-taking at the end. I didn't have the proverbial white dress on, mostly because none would fit, and partly because it would've been an exercise in futility. After all, it was pointless to be virginal. I was seven months along and as large as a hippo. There was no aisle to march on, no soft string music in the background, just close family members and friends present.

My husband, bless his Soul, had arranged everything for our wedding, including our reception, the wedding cake, even my bouquet. I had been uncomfortably infanticipating (it was a difficult pregnancy, with a few miscarriage scares and the specter of pre-eclampsia looming over my already precarious condition). So, with no other recourse to take, Jaime took it upon himself to organize everything for our special day, with very little help from his bride-to-be (I just came up with the invitations list.)

I don't know how many other grooms

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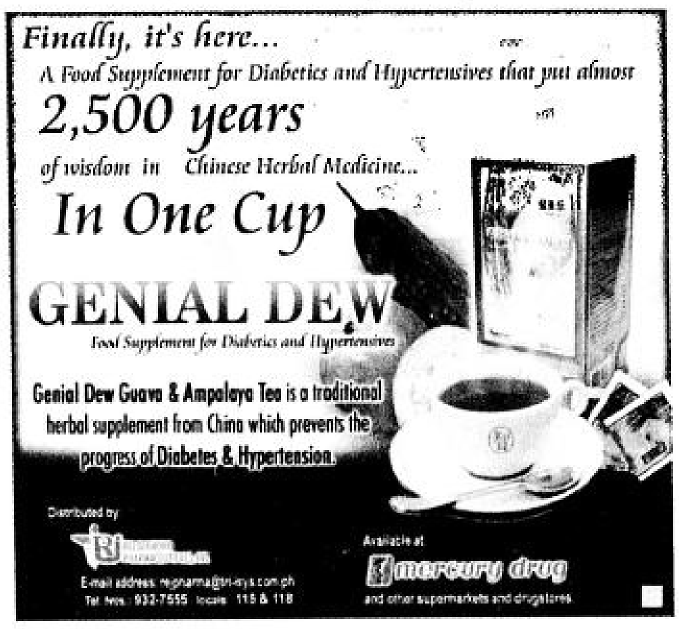
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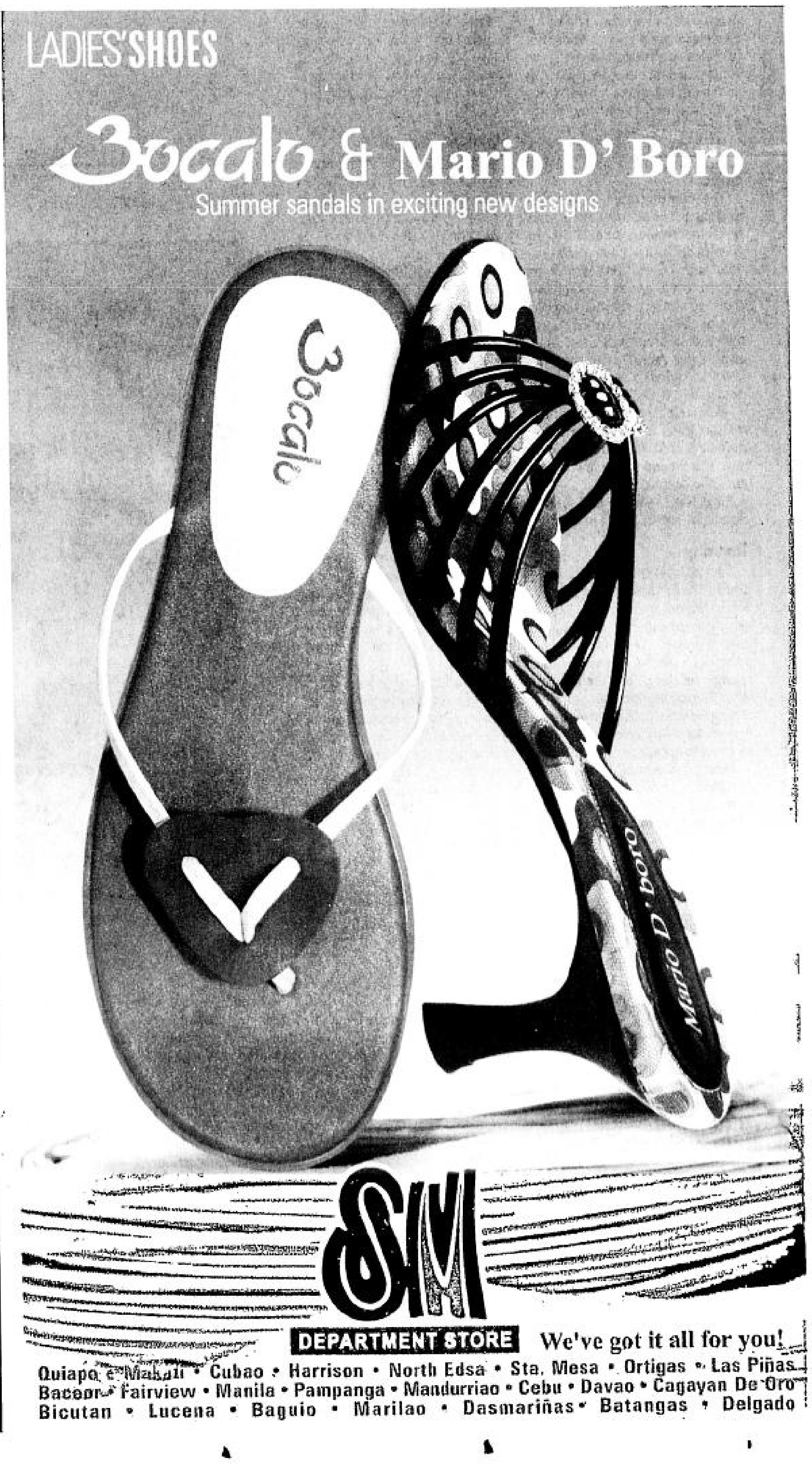
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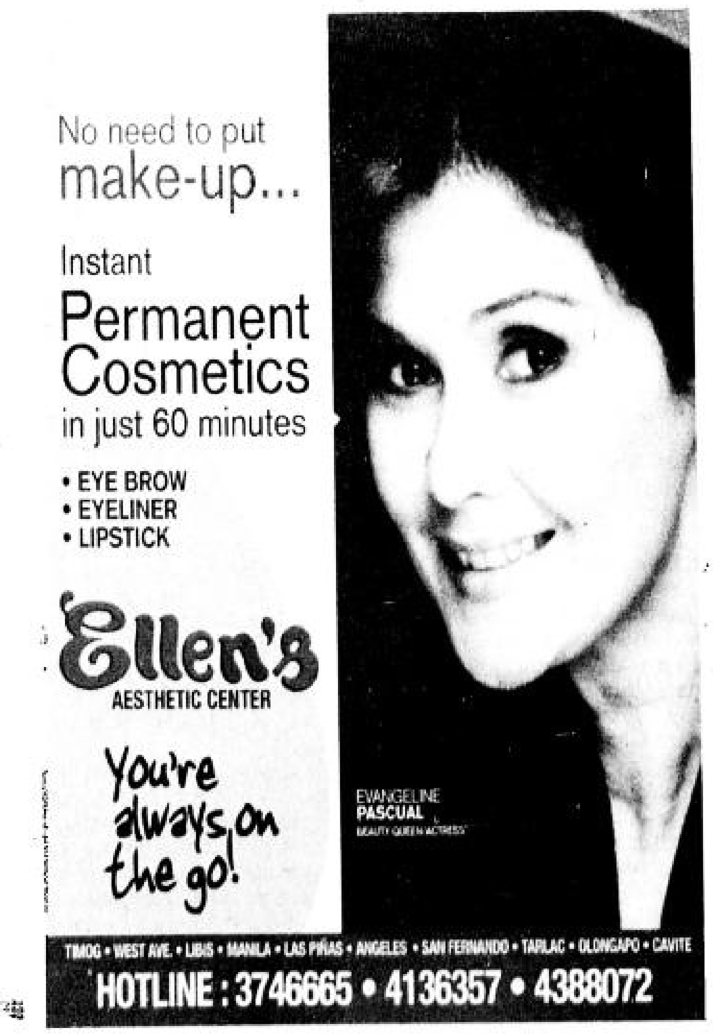
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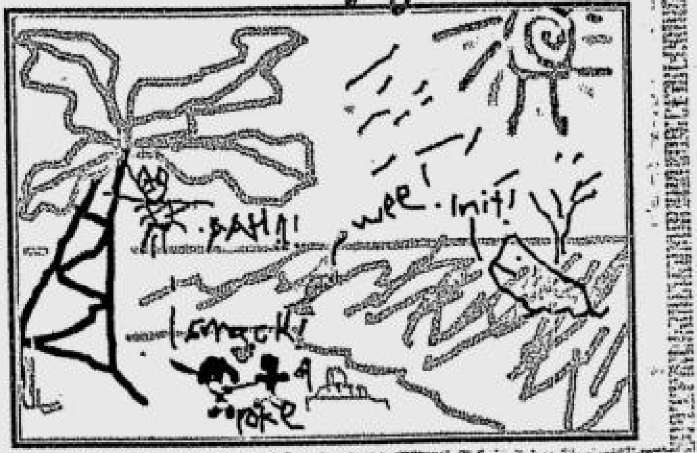
Love in the time of technology

Ramon Felipe Rubio made his creative expression of love for Arianne using the doodle function of Yahoo! Messenger.


BAH!
wee!
init!
smack!
poke

Seatmates

By Natasha P. Tabucal

SECOND semester 2000, UP Diliman. Coming from two heartbreaks, I had finally convinced myself that college boys and serious relationship couldn't be used in the same sentence.

My first heartbreak shattered any dreams I had of marrying my first boyfriend. The second relationship was more of a mutual fling. But after two weeks (or was it one?), we had the sanity to call it quits.

"This would be good for my studies, at least," I told myself. In fact, just to motivate myself more, I tried to find a cute guy in every class so I wouldn't think of skipping class.

I scanned ES 26 (Computer Programming) class and didn't find a prospect. It didn't really matter that much, since more than half of my classmates were good friends. But just as the instructor was giving the course outline, the door opened and in came this cool-looking guy.

"Si Baq, *oh*," one of my friends remarked.

"He'll do. Well, not just for this class, but also for my majors," I told myself.

The following week, the instructor assigned us our computers (and seats) for the whole sem. The room was divided into two columns, with each column big enough to accommodate two computers. We assumed the arrangement would be alphabetical. But the instructor said I should be front seat, right aisle. Three second later, the professor called out, "Francis Baquiran!" "Great!" I told myself.

Well, things didn't really turn out that great at first. We were not formally introduced, and we didn't talk. This went on for a few weeks until one fateful day.

"Bye, Nat," he said. And I was on cloud nine for the rest of the day.

Text day

We had a hi-hello-goodbye relationship from thereon. But finally, we exchanged numbers and began texting each other. I don't know how it started, but Sundays became our text day. We would exchange messages the entire day. With 30-minute intervals, I had a feeling we were both timing this for two reasons—to save money and so as not to appear too excited.

Then on Valentine's Day 2001, my friends announced that they were setting me up on a blind date. Of course, I pressed for clues as to who my date would be. One information stood out. They had enlisted Baq's help to set it up. I thought it was him. My friends must've read how I looked and assured me it wasn't him.

We were at the fair two days after, along with a big group of friends. By that time I already knew who my date was—a person I knew way back from freshman year. We even saw each other that night, and by the way we exchanged greetings, it was obvious he also knew his 'blind date' was going to be me.

As the night wore off, I desperately tried to convince friends to go with me on the Octopus ride. I convinced three, one of whom was Baq. I'm still uncertain how Baq and I ended up being on the same ride. But how my heart thumped wildly when we were up there!

Friends below must've noticed us being on the same ride because as we alighted, the teasing had already begun. "Now we're going to be awkward around each other," we said.

Making me laugh

Still, the same casual friendship continued. But what others didn't know was that we were already getting to know each other more. Two months later, he asked me out.

I was not sure how the first date would turn out because our communication then was mainly through cell phone. I didn't even dress up for the date (just my regular jeans and top), because I didn't want to expect too much.

Five minutes into the date, he was already making me laugh. I knew right then that everything would fall nicely into place. We went out for another two months. Come July, several months after I had decided to forego love for a while, it found me again.

This year, Baq and I will be celebrating our fourth year together. Every day, I thank God for blessing me with this wonderful relationship. I have found a person who shares my dreams, who nurtures my values and who challenges my mind, among others.

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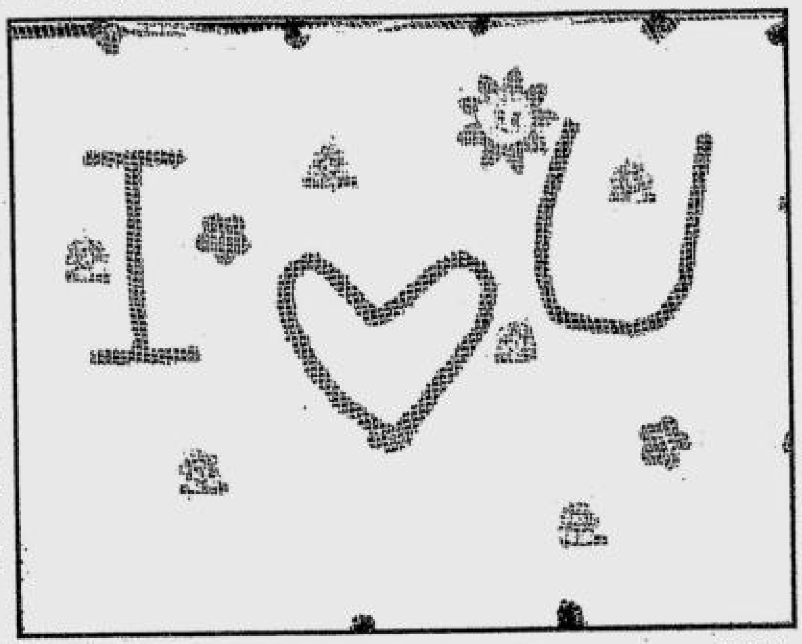

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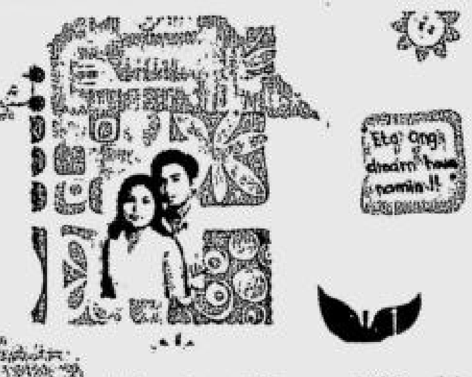
Eto ang dream house namin!!

Kuya

By Marla Miniano
2bU! Correspondent

JANUARY 12, 2005

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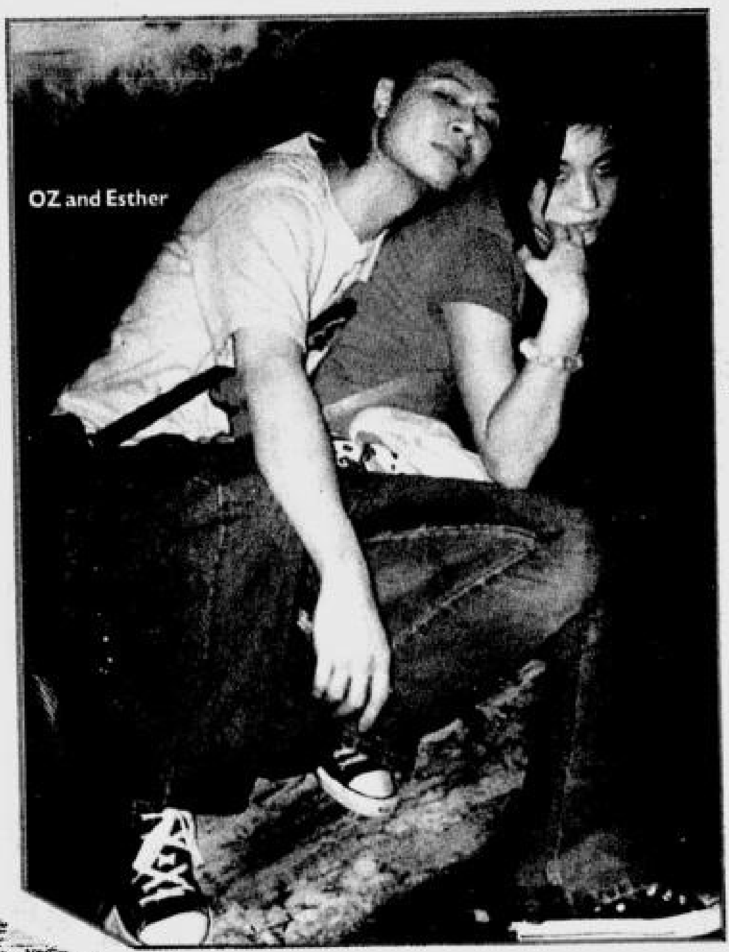

OZ and Esther

Fireflies

By Oz Mendoza

Fireflies burning up the night
There is no more beautiful light
As shivering we lie
Hand in hand entwined,
Waiting for shooting stars.
In this moment we are children
Innocently sharing one blanket,
Excited, unable to sleep,
Wide-eyed and giddy with awe
At this rich world's great dance.
I want to pull you close, be your tide,
Sweep you into the soft warm shore of these arms.
In a sidelong glance I watch you as
Your eyes collect the starlight
'Til you yourself pulsate,
An earthbound luminary,
A splinter of star time.
I close my eyes and see you running wild,
The grasses rippling at your feet
As you dart through the night like a dancing flame.
And now I feel you fade, your hands slip away,
I feel the coldness encroach the regions of my skin.
I want to cup your hand in mine
And keep this small fire close to me forever.
I'm left holding only a wish, tonight
But I dream and I pray
One night you'll crawl into my tent again
And we'll make the darkness glow
Like two fireflies.

Dream wedding

From page F1

would willingly do all this for their betrothed, but Jaime certainly came through for us that day. And has continued doing so ever since.

We had met a scant nine months earlier, although we had both gone to the same university. On the one hand, he was the quintessential privileged bad boy back in his formative years—a regular hell-raiser who drank, smoked and partied throughout much of his academic life, and who, without a doubt and on more than one occasion, broke his mother's heart and those of a few other unfortunate girls as well. He never did care much for school, though he was obviously smart as a whip, with a keen wit and a sharp tongue to match.

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Enter my knight in shining armor. He had been one of many nameless faces in the college crowd, and although I had seen him from time to time (his tambayan was a couple of benches down from mine along a busy school corridor), I never met him. Much later, I was to find out he had had a crush on me all along, dating back to high school when he would attend our concerts just to see and hear me sing.

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All the while we talked, and listened, and talked some more.

After that, we were inseparable. He would pick me up from work every single day and take me all the way home to Paranaque (he lived in San Juan). Once, when I mentioned I was hungry during a late night at the office, he brought me a roast chicken dinner he had made himself. Another time I complained of feeling cold, and he appeared at my building with a jacket in hand.

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Little gestures

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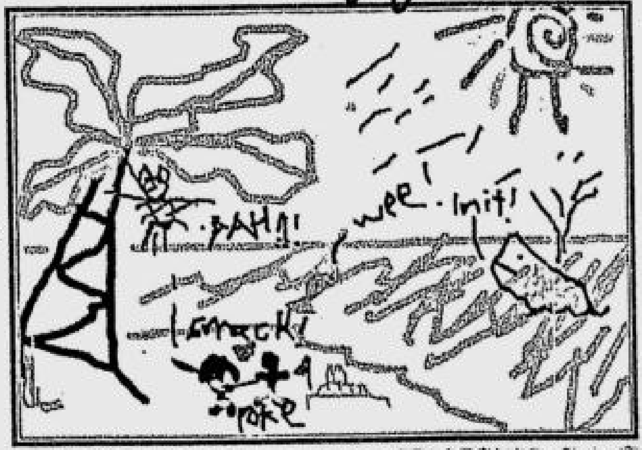
Love in the time of technology

Ramon Felipe Rubio made his creative expression of love for Arianne using the doodle function of Yahoo! Messenger.


BAH!
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Poke

Kuya

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Seatmates

By Natasha P. Tabucal

SECOND semester 2000, UP Diliman. Coming from two heartbreaks, I had finally convinced myself that college boys and serious relationship couldn't be used in the same sentence.

My first heartbreak shattered any dreams I had of marrying my first boyfriend. The second relationship was more of a mutual fling. But after two weeks (or was it one?), we had the sanity to call it quits.

"This would be good for my studies, at least," I told myself. In fact, just to motivate myself more, I tried to find a cute guy in every class so I wouldn't think of skipping class.

I scanned ES 26 (Computer Programming) class and didn't find a prospect. It didn't really matter that much, since more than half of my classmates were good friends. But just as the instructor was giving the course outline, the door opened and in came this cool-looking guy.

"*Si* Baq, *oh*," one of my friends remarked.

"He'll do. Well, not just for this class, but also for my majors," I told myself.

The following week, the instructor assigned us our computers (and seats) for the whole sem. The room was divided into two columns, with each column big enough to accommodate two computers. We assumed the arrangement would be alphabetical. But the instructor said I should be front seat, right aisle. Three second later, the professor called out, "Francis Baquiran!" "Great!" I told myself.

Well, things didn't really turn out that great at first. We were not formally introduced, and we didn't talk. This went on for a few weeks until one fateful day.

"Bye, Nat," he said. And I was on cloud nine for the rest of the day.

Text day

We had a hi-hello-goodbye relationship from thereon. But finally, we exchanged numbers and began texting each other. I don't know how it started, but Sundays became our text day. We would exchange messages the entire day. With 30-minute intervals, I had a feeling we were both timing this for two reasons—to save money and so as not to appear too excited.

Then on Valentine's Day 2001, my friends announced that they were setting me up on a blind date. Of course, I pressed for clues as to who my date would be. One information stood out. They had enlisted Baq's help to set it up. I thought it was him. My friends must've read how I looked and assured me it wasn't him.

We were at the fair two days after, along with a big group of friends. By that time I already knew who my date was—a person I knew way back from freshman year. We even saw each other that night, and by the way we exchanged greetings, it was obvious he also knew his 'blind date' was going to be me.

As the night wore off, I desperately tried to convince friends to go with me on the Octopus ride. I convinced three, one of whom was Baq. I'm still uncertain how Baq and I ended up being on the same ride. But how my heart thumped wildly when we were up there!

Friends below must've noticed us being on the same ride because as we alighted, the teasing had already begun. "Now we're going to be awkward around each other," we said.

Making me laugh

Still, the same casual friendship continued. But what others didn't know was that we were already getting to know each other more. Two months later, he asked me out.

I was not sure how the first date would turn out because our communication then was mainly through cell phone. I didn't even dress up for the date (just my regular jeans and top), because I didn't want to expect too much.

Five minutes into the date, he was already making me laugh. I knew right then that everything would fall nicely into place. We went out for another two months. Come July, several months after I had decided to forego love for a while, it found me again.

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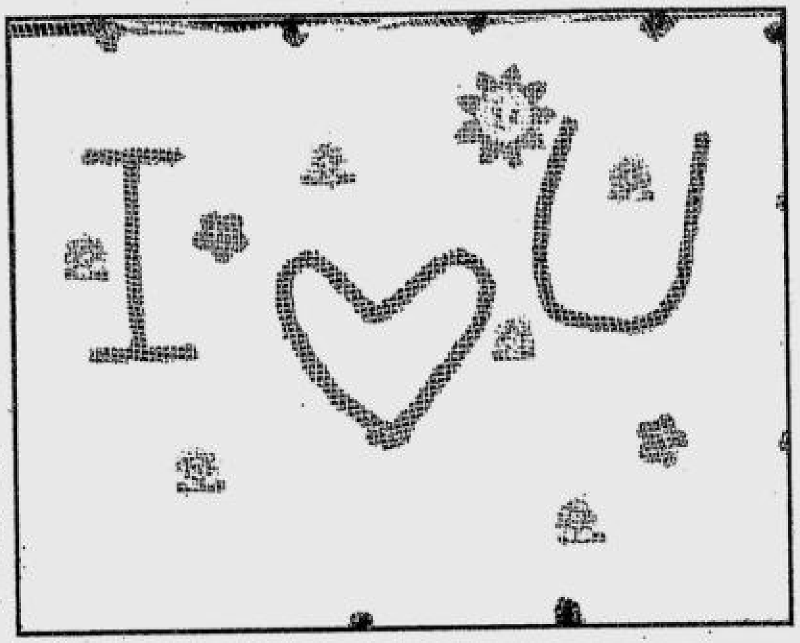

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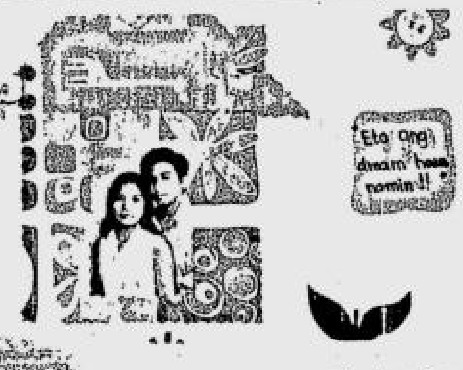
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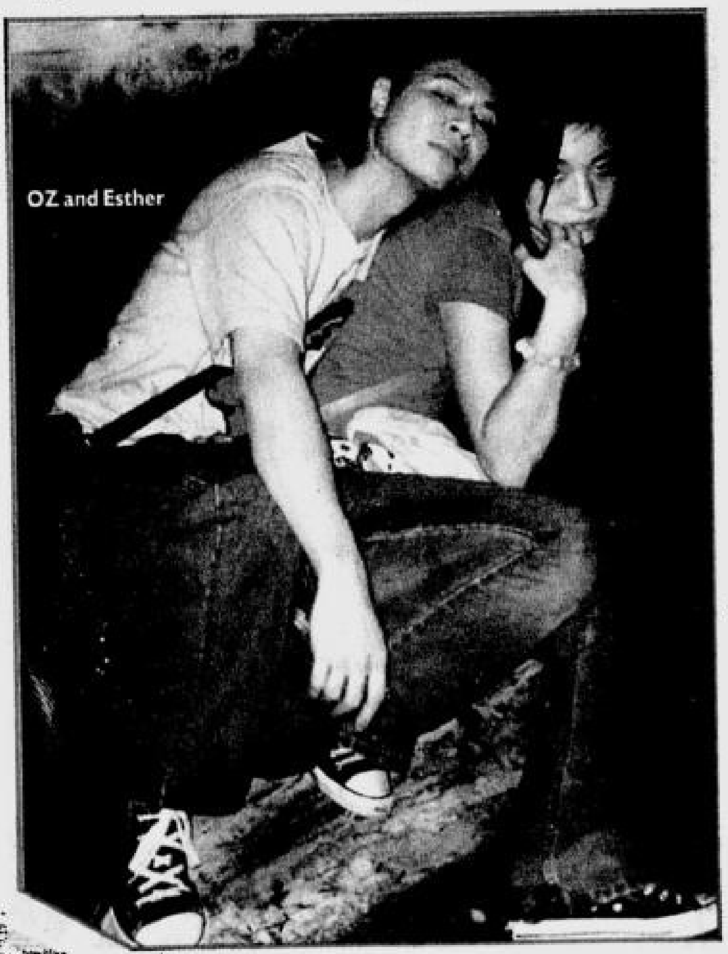

OZ and Esther

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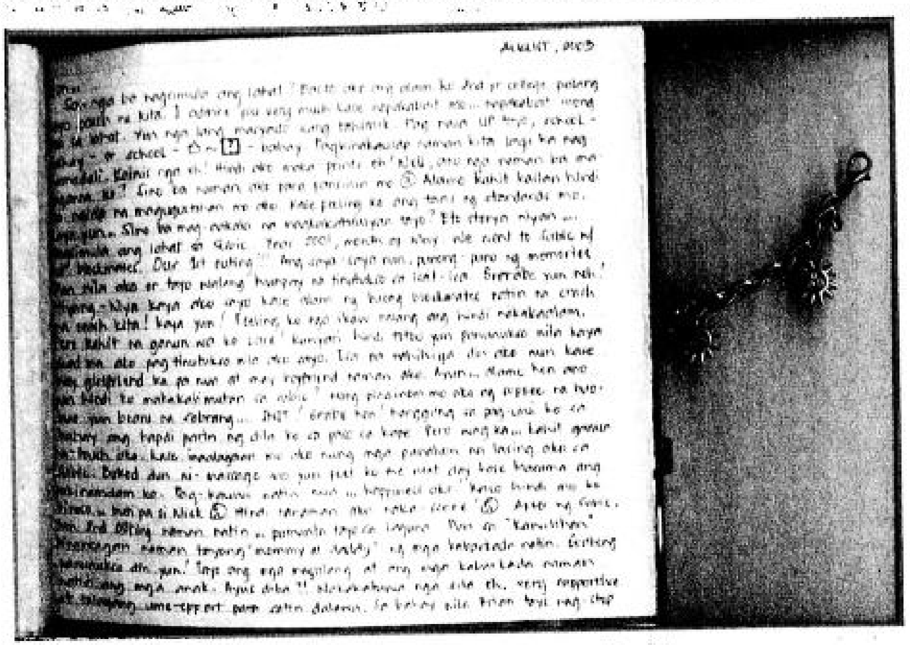
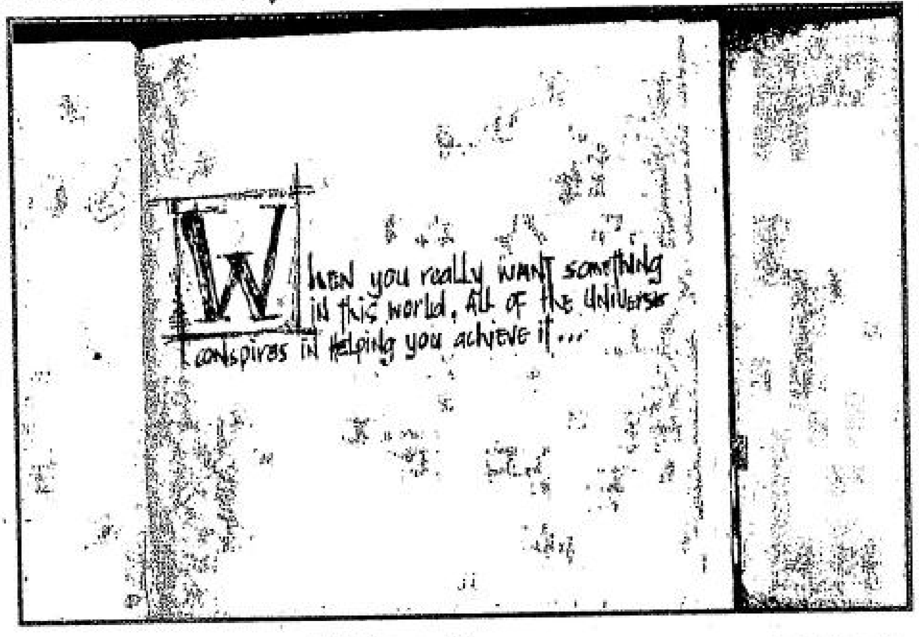


From the journal pages of Maria Rica Raissa Zaldivar



When you really want something in this world, all of the Universe conspires in helping you achieve it...

Serendipity

By Katherine Chan

UNTIL I met my boyfriend, I thought love that arose from fortuitous events was just stuff you could find in sappy movies like "Serendipity."

How wrong I was. On the day I met him, I was supposed to work out at the gym, but it was closed because it was New Year's Eve. I had been eating a lot over the holidays so I couldn't miss my workout. I decided to go to our building's free community gym, which I normally didn't go to.

When I entered, a cute guy was there and he said hi to me. I was wearing my school shirt and, when he saw it, he said he also went to the same school.

We were the only ones in the gym. I actually didn't get to do much 'cause we kept on talking. After I was done, we walked home together, but we didn't exchange numbers. He didn't ask and I didn't, either, because I didn't want to seem too eager.

We had no common friends and it was extremely unlikely he'd knock on my door. I had no choice but to hope for another chance encounter in the gym or at school.

I started going to the free gym but I never saw him there again. A month went by without me seeing him.

One day, our English class had a free cut and my friend asked me to eat with him at the cafeteria. We were on our way back to our *tambayan* when I saw the cute guy again. I wasn't sure if it was him at first, but after some thinking, I made my friend come with me to see if it was really the guy. We found ourselves at the PE area where he was sitting on a bench, waiting for his class to begin.

My friend and I pretended we were looking at some announcements. I felt shy and didn't know what to do, so my friend told me he'd go to the bathroom and watch from the window so I could be on my own to approach the guy.

I stood there for about five minutes, unable to speak to him and feeling utterly stupid. Finally, our eyes met and he smiled. I was so relieved he recognized me. We began talking and, this time, he asked for my number.

Going home together

Thank god it wasn't an "I'll call you (but I really won't)" thing. A few minutes after I left, he texted me saying he was really glad to see me again. We met up at our condo after school and we talked for the longest time. After that incident, we met up regularly and started going home together.

The more we got to know each other, the more we found out we had a lot of things in common. For example, he has three brothers and I have three sisters. We're both the second child in the family. We both like animé and the Discovery Channel. Neither of us watches the UAAP basketball games (no offense to fans). We both love KFC, and ever since we met, we've been eating there almost every day.

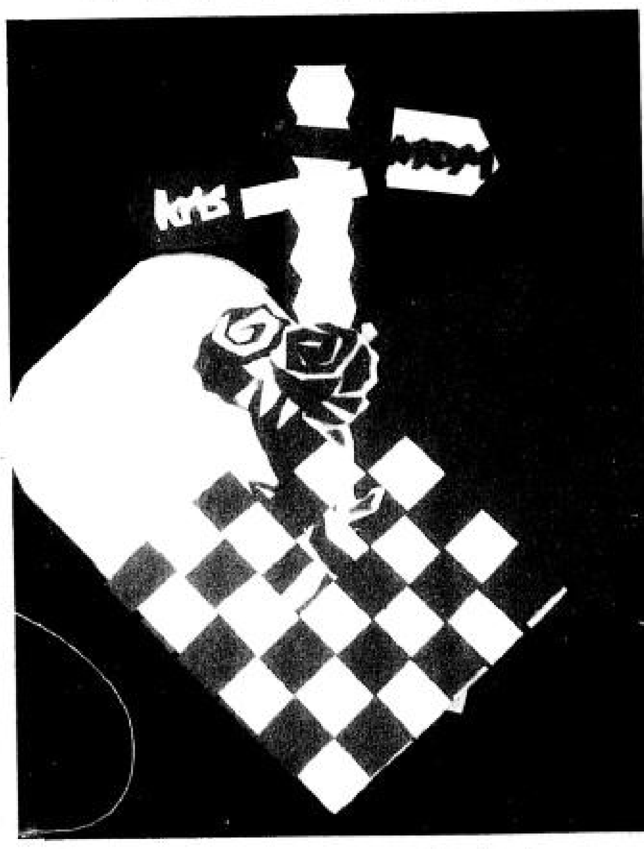
We even found out we both went to the Vanilla Ice concert in Manila when we were kids! And friends noticed another strange thing. My user ID in all my net accounts had always been Cho Chang because I love Harry Potter. Well, I only realized this when my friend asked me about it: My boyfriend's name is Zedrick and that's really close to Cedric. Cedric Diggory is Cho Chang's boyfriend in Harry Potter! Never mind that he dies in Book 4.

My boyfriend and I dated for months but didn't make things official, although it certainly looked that way to our friends. But now we're a couple, and I think because most of the events that led to our meeting depended heavily on luck, we get to appreciate our relationship more.

If I had decided not to work out that day or if the gym I normally went to was open, we wouldn't have met. If there were other people in the gym with us, we probably wouldn't have talked to each other (we're both introverts). If my friend hadn't invited me to eat with him, I might not have seen him again.

Being with him has helped me be grateful for the small things in life, which, more often than not, add up to make a difference. Just when I thought the world was getting old and predictable, life's complexity again asserted itself. It completely caught me unaware when it churned out the most pleasant, unexpected surprise I have ever encountered.

For weeks we were swamped with entries from all over the Philippines. Here are some that touched our hearts



Made with the loving hands of Kris Daluz for her mom

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giving me my own plot of land to play with.

He spoils my daughter and I silly, devotes whatever time he can to our little family despite having to sleep during the day and work all night, and whenever I have a concern or complaint, he genuinely listens, even if reluctantly at first sometimes.

He knows me, and how to handle me, and when to leave me alone and when to draw me closer. Most of the time he admits when he's wrong, and actually apologizes. He still makes my favorite food, shares in the housework, and indulges my wish to stay home as a full-time mommy.

We may not have tons of money, and there may be several things we need to work on—I look forward to having our church wedding with all the trimmings, for one—but I wouldn't change anything about our story. I only look forward to creating more of it and, in turn, recounting it to our children, and the children I hope they will have someday.

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You are always on my mind

I WANT to share with you the letter that my boyfriend wrote before he went to the US. He isn't the type of person who writes love letters, thus making this his first and last hand-written love letter more special to me. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I do. If this happens to be one of the lucky winners, I hope that our names be changed. Thank you.

Dear Ophelia,

Goodbye, I think, is one of the hardest words to say. It is because, I think, of the memories we attach to it. In my goodbye, I attach memories of my friends, my family. I see fleeting pictures of faces and places that have had a place in my life. If it so happens that I am gone for a long time, then I will miss them. But of all that I leave behind it is you I will miss the most.

With you, I remember a host of things. I remember laughing with you and I remember crying with you. I remember useless arguments and I remember our tender moments together. I can still feel your kisses on my face. But what I remember most is how I'd come to you when I'm exhausted and find rest in your arms.

It hurts me that I have to leave, and I never even thought that it was me who'd leave. Didn't I always maintain that I want to live and die in the Philippines? Isn't it funny how life works? Funny, sure, but it hurts all the same.

I've said that only time and distance separates us when I leave, and I still believe it. What scares me is all the unknown factors that will arise when we're apart. I love you, and I want to be with you again. But what if fate is against us? What if March 3 is the last time I'll hold you? As much as I fight against it, there is a chance of that happening, and I must accept it.

All in all, I'm glad that you've been a part of my life, and honored to have been a part of yours. People say that only when you are in love are you truly alive. Well, I guess I've never been more alive than these past two years. These past two years have been sweet and would have been sweeter still, had we the time.

I've been searching for words to tell you how I feel for the past few days, and was surprised to find it in a song. It goes like this:

Maybe I didn't treat you, quite as good as I should have

And maybe I didn't love you, quite as often as I could have

Little things I should have said and done, I just never had the time

But you were always on my mind

Mr. Presley will have to forgive me if I take these words as my own, but they seem to fit me so well.

I'm sorry, baby, that I couldn't give you more. That I couldn't spend more time with you. I feel like I didn't show you my love as often enough. But like the song, you were always on my mind.

In closing, I'd like you to close your eyes as I kiss you goodnight (Mwah!).

There are no monsters, baby, for I've scared them all away (shoo mawnstews!).

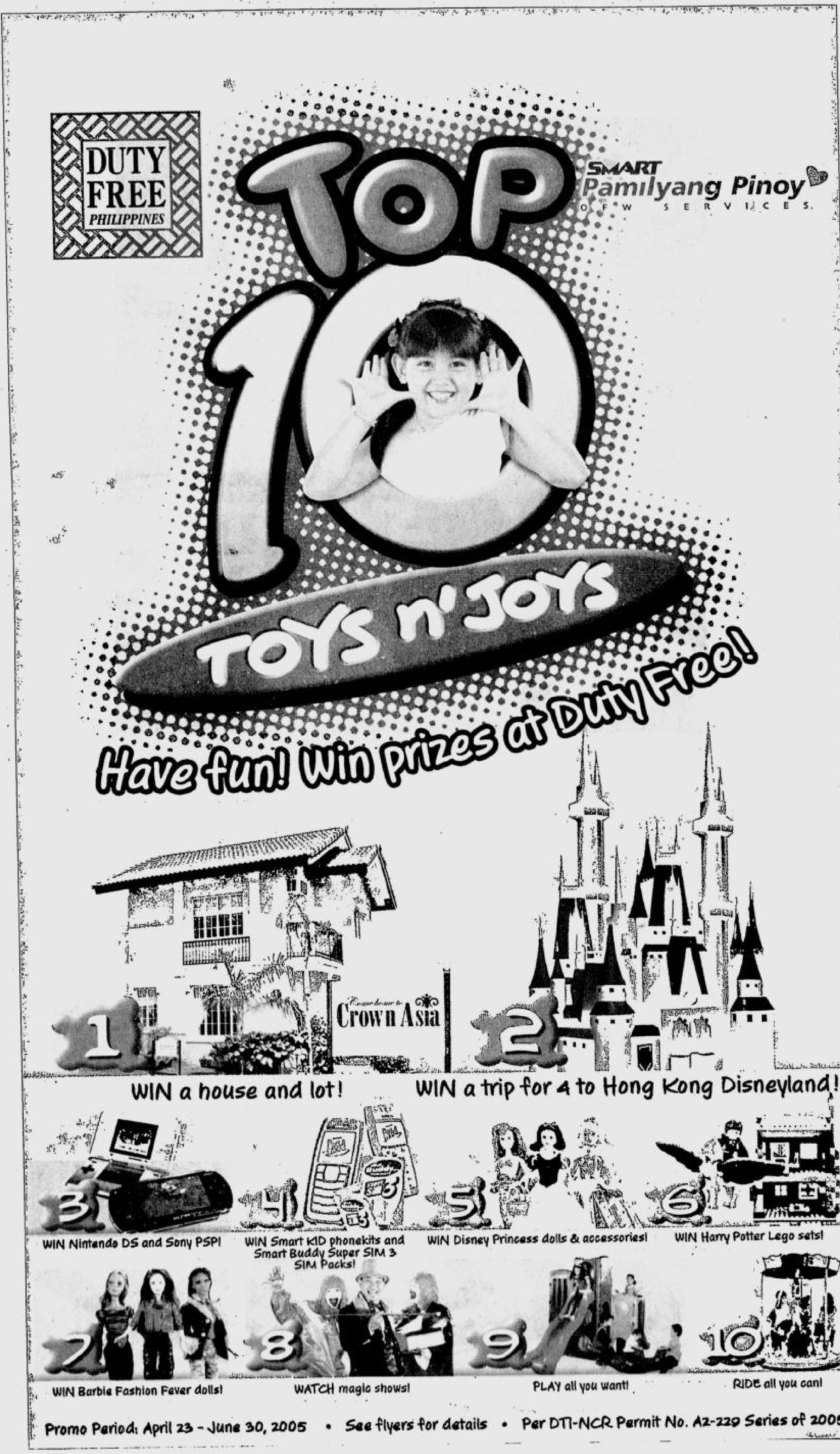
And don't worry, everything will be all right.

And, yes, I will come back.

I love you, baby.

Yours always,
Dominic :)

> People say that only when you are in love are you truly alive. Well, I guess I've never been more alive than these past two years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MAQUI and Jamie

Search completed

By Jamie Nevalga

From: Nevalga, Jamie
Sent: Thursday, Aug. 19, 2004 6:04 PM
To: Endaya, Franco Antonio
Subject: Marcus Greer

Hello Bebe,

I interviewed a very interesting applicant this afternoon. His name is Marcus Greer, a 36-year-old native of California. Bulk of our conversation was on his very unusual wife search. Looking for that perfect match, he said, is no easy task. One must consider the following:

A. Similarity of religion
B. Intelligence
C. Philosophy in life

Hearing this initially, I told myself it is such a shame that we, despite that weird chemistry that we have, simply just aren't a match especially on item B. (Joke!)

A. Similar Religion. You are passionate about your God. I do not have one. 'Nuff said.

B. Intelligence. We may not be on the same level academically, but in my heart I know we are compatible because we are both streetwise and people-smart.

C. Philosophy in life. We are both very open to each other's ideas, flaws and past mistakes. We both manage money very well. We may differ in terms of our concepts of marriage, an ideal subdivision/barangay, religion or the need for exclusivity in relationships. But I am sure, since we are both broad-minded and understanding, that we can meet halfway and overcome our differences.

So why am I saying this? I asked Marcus if he has ever shortlisted someone before and he said yes. But he missed that one chance to end this search. If he ends up lonely and miserable for the rest of his life, he will always regret that he let go of that one perfect match.

If I ever let you go (though I know that with my looks and charms, it's impossible for me to end up lonely) I will definitely be miserable for the rest of my life. People die at the age of 65. I am only 21 years, yet I am very lucky that I'm through with my search even before I've started it.

I shiver at the idea of spending the rest of my life with only one person. But the idea of you not being in my life scares me more.

I love you so much.

Forever yours,
Maqui

LIFESTYLE

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Text us your feedback: inquirer 2bu name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Love reborn

DWIGHT and Fe

By Doreen Quiaoit

My parent's marriage is far from perfect. Although we have had occasional "ketchup-commercial" family moments where everything seemed perfect, I vividly remember the shouts, accusations and other painful events that also come with a marriage.

Seeing my parents argue endlessly, I almost found myself losing faith in love. Little did I know that I was, in fact, about to become a witness to the most painful, and yet the most beautiful and touching, love story one could ever behold.

On October 11, 2004, my father, Dwight, 50 years old, was going through his daily routine when he collapsed. He cried for help and was brought to the hospital. Later that day, he had a stroke. I arrived at the hospital room when my father was being wheeled out to the ICU.

My mother, who rarely cried, was sobbing. Not fully understanding what was going on, I hugged my mom and cried, too. At that point I knew our life would never be the same again.

True enough, the following day, my dad's condition worsened. He fell into a coma due to three major blood clots in his brain and brain stem. Doctors, seeing that death was inevitable, refused to perform surgery on him.

Yet, despite his slim chance of coming out of surgery alive, my mom insisted that the doctors try. After much talk and persuasion, they finally decided to take the risk. I feared we would never see my dad ever again.

Six agonizing hours of tears and prayers, and my dad finally came out. He was in a state of coma, but through God's grace, he was alive.

The story could have ended there. It would be ideal to say, "Okay! They lived happily ever after." But no. In fact, the love story only begins here.

You see, before this whole drama happened, my mom and dad were constant enemies. They barely saw each other, and when they did, they just ended up shouting at each other. You'd think there was no love between them.

But after this incident, I saw how my mom never left the hospital. Not even to sleep, not even to get clothes, not even to work. She was always there beside my dad, every day waiting for some sign of progress, tirelessly observing and fervently praying that he would get out of the coma.

I saw my mom grow thinner, her eyebags darker, her eyes sadder and more sorrowful each day. But she stood strong and steadfast. If you saw my dad then, it was easy to spiral into depression, to give up and call it a lost cause. But no. My mom was always full of hope.

She never stopped "talking" to my dad. We couldn't tell if he could hear us, but she was always trying to reach him, encouraging us kids to talk to him, too. She never left his side. And she never stopped trying to get signs out of him, to check if he was coming back.

She would go to the ICU every day and say, "Dwight, if you hear me, squeeze my hand." At first, it seemed futile. There was no response. But eventually, my dad began responding. Squeezes turned to turns of the head. Then he opened his eyes. Slowly, one step at a time, my dad regained back his life.

Within a few weeks, my dad had regained consciousness. A month after, he was out of the hospital. Now after several months, and my dad is indeed a living miracle. Doctors thought it impossible that he would come out alive. But now he is walking (with some help), he can feed himself, he consciously goes to the bathroom, he can pick up objects, he can laugh at corny jokes and he can even "hold" his first grandson.

My dad has indeed, gone a long way. But more importantly, my mom has been with him every step of the way. As he struggled to live, she was always there by his side, reading him the newspaper, telling him a new joke or reporting the whereabouts of his children.

She always wracks her brains for something to amuse dad with, like bringing him to Market! Market!, to a McDonald's drive-through, or recently, to a hot springs resort in Laguna.

She always put up a brave front, never showing us how painful it was to see her husband like this. Never letting on how worried she was with all the medical bills and expenses. Sometimes, I even caught her crying in secret. But whenever we approached, she would quickly wipe away the tears away and attend to us.

With my dad continuing to fight his illness and depression, and mom standing by him, I see my parents' marriage begin to blossom and strengthen again.

This is a story of a man who transcends death and fights his way back to life, and of the woman who selflessly dedicates her life to him as she had once promised to do on their marriage day. All because of the one thing that brought them together in the first place: love.

DOREEN'S parents

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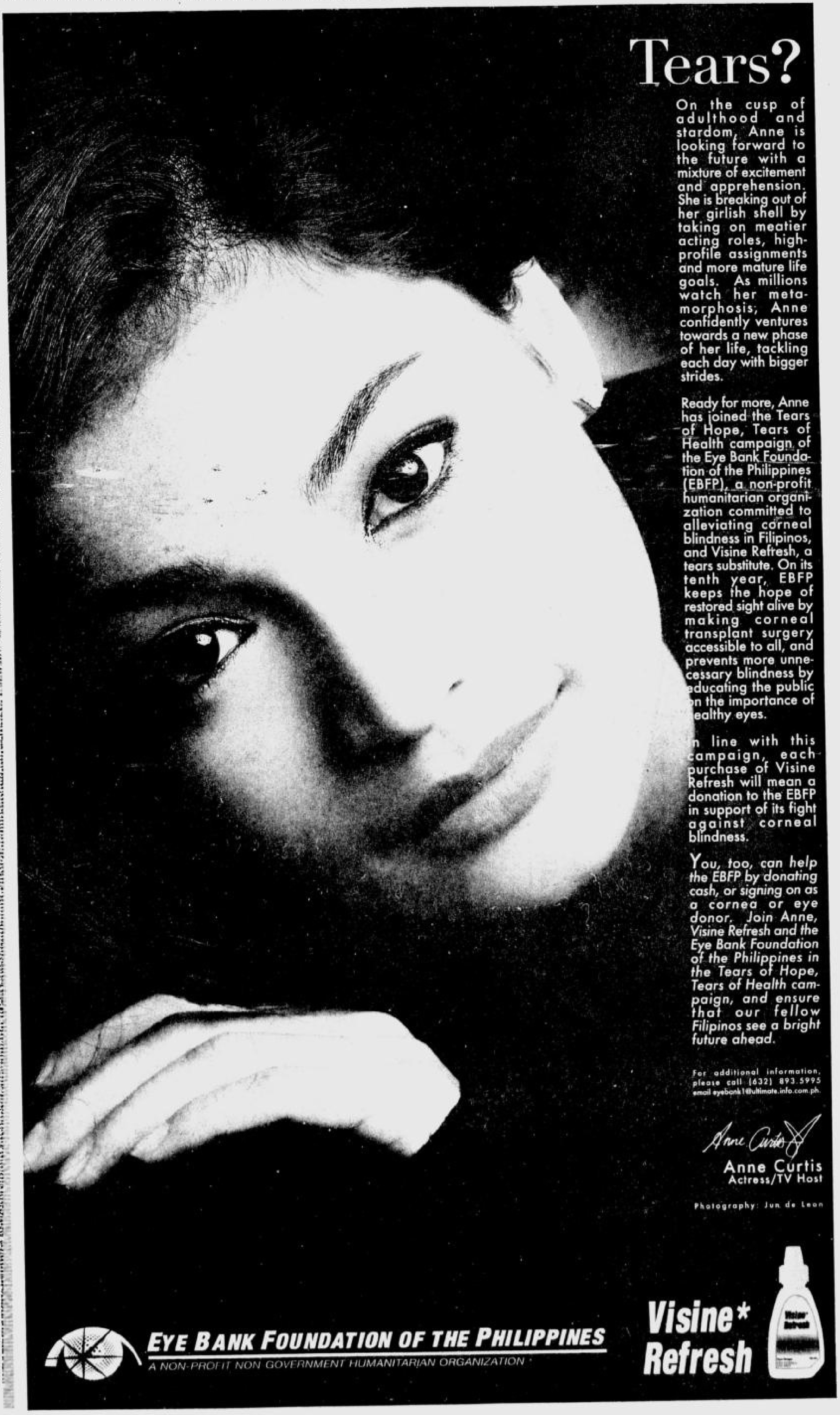
Tears?

On the cusp of adulthood and stardom, Anne is looking forward to the future with a mixture of excitement and apprehension. She is breaking out of her girlish shell by taking on meatier acting roles, high-profile assignments and more mature life goals. As millions watch her metamorphosis, Anne confidently ventures towards a new phase of her life, tackling each day with bigger strides.

Ready for more, Anne has joined the Tears of Hope, Tears of Health campaign of the Eye Bank Foundation of the Philippines (EBFP), a non-profit humanitarian organization committed to alleviating corneal blindness in Filipinos, and Visine Refresh, a tears substitute. On its tenth year, EBFP keeps the hope of restored sight alive by making corneal transplant surgery accessible to all, and prevents more unnecessary blindness by educating the public on the importance of healthy eyes.

In line with this campaign, each purchase of Visine Refresh will mean a donation to the EBFP in support of its fight against corneal blindness.

You, too, can help the EBFP by donating cash, or signing on as a cornea or eye donor. Join Anne, Visine Refresh and the Eye Bank Foundation of the Philippines in the Tears of Hope, Tears of Health campaign, and ensure that our fellow Filipinos see a bright future ahead.

For additional information, please call (632) 893.5995 email eyebank1@ultimate.info.com.ph.

Anne Curtis
Anne Curtis
Actress/TV Host

Photography: Jun de Leon

EYE BANK FOUNDATION OF THE PHILIPPINES
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Visine* Refresh

Refuge for the abused

By Paolo R Reyes
2bU! Correspondent

SOMETIMES in the night, she would dream of him, a frightening face, half-forgotten and fleetingly remembered, that would rudely rouse her from sleep.

At 24, Ofelia thought herself to be too old for nightmares, such as this unnerving image, summoned up perhaps from the realms of her subconscious, which would often haunt her during these dark hours.

But the face of her late father, she realized, was one not easily forgotten.

Seven years ago, Ofelia seemed to be leading a life no less ordinary than your average teenager. She was a promising young student at a local polytechnic college pursuing a degree in commerce. But beneath this benign surface lurked a bleak existence: the blighted life of a dutiful daughter sworn to secrecy, and silence. Ofelia, unknown to her family and friends, was secretly suffering from the trauma of incest.

Years of sexual abuse had finally taken its toll on Ofelia, once a gregarious and outgoing girl, whose cheerful countenance had turned considerably grim, her genial manner now taciturn and introspective.

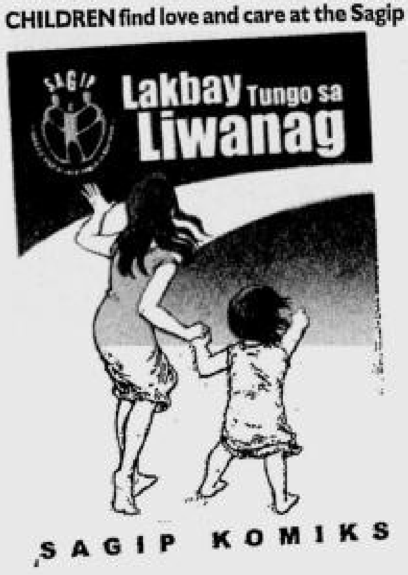
Fortunately, an unlikely confidante came in the form of a concerned professor, who would often catch her staring dolefully into the distance during class hours. Upon her teacher's insistence, Ofelia admitted herself to the Saklolo at Gabay ng Ina at Pamilya (Sagip), a crisis and rehabilitative center for abused women and children in Muntinlupa City.

Ofelia, like countless other victims who sought refuge in Sagip, was offered legal assistance and psychological counseling.

"I was so young and did not have any knowledge of the legal process—filing papers, going to court hearings—but they helped me with all of that," she said.

"At the same time, the psychological counseling sessions taught me to stand on my own and not be ashamed of what happened. In the end, I realized that I could not allow something like that to break me."

CHILDREN find love and care at the Sagip shelter.



Shelter

Each month, an average of 30 abused women and children seek shelter in Sagip, many of whom have run away from their own families while others were rescued by concerned friends, relatives, and neighbors. To these women and children, Sagip offers a refuge where they can restore their self-worth and dignity.

The crisis center has a psychologist, volunteer lawyer, and counselors for crisis intervention. It also maintains an emergency shelter where women and children can stay while cases are being processed for further intervention and referral.

Information and assistance, especially for clients whose lives may be at risk, are made available at all times through a 24-hour hotline manned by trained staff.

"When you are the victim of abuse—be it physical or sexual—you become very numb," explains Brenda L. Tanjutco, president and founder of Sagip, which was established on June 22, 1998, through the collaboration of the Zonta Club of Muntinlupa and the Muntinlupa City government.

"There are very few reports of these incidents since many of these women, especially those from the lower strata of society, feel they cannot seek help because of their conditions in life."

In light of this reality, Sagip intends to step up its information, education and communication activities to increase community awareness on the issues of violence and abuse and act collectively to curtail such incidences.

One of its recent projects aimed to increase awareness was the launch of the Sagip Komiks titled "Lakbay Tungo sa Liwanag," which illustrates the different forms of abuse through stories.

According to Tanjutco, such programs have proven to be effective tools to enlighten people on issues of violence and encourage the community to be more vigilant and participate in advocacy work.

Support groups

The foundation is also enhancing its programs and services to better respond to the needs of its growing client base.

Last year, Sagip created support groups for battered women to assist them toward healing and empowerment through group activities and various psycho-therapeutic interventions.

One of these activities is "Dance and Play Therapy," an expressive exercise that is believed to further the emotional, cognitive, social and physical integration of individuals suffering from abuse.

"Many women are afraid of the social stigma that will surround them," relates Tanjutco. "Most of them have a clear view of what they want to be and desire to attain a sense of self-fulfillment in their lives. Through Sagip we hope to aid them in gaining back their courage and strength."

Today, the circumstances surrounding Ofelia's life are far more sanguine: Her abusive father had passed away last year in prison and she is now happily married and the mother of two children.

Sometimes in the night, when her family is fast asleep, Ofelia cannot contain her own tears, and so she cries—for all the grief she cannot express and for the profound sense of gratitude that overcomes her.

Then she returns to sleep, well aware that she will be awakened again by the disconcerting specter of her father's face.

"Trauma lasts forever," she says, "but the abuse should not."

Help put an end to violence and abuse against women and children. To make a donation, call Sagip at 8620062 to 65.

Win 'American Idol' goodies!

WE'RE as shocked as you are. Constantine was kicked out before Scott? Amazing. As Rosie O Donnell said in her blog, "cannot believe constantine lost! It isn't even on yet here in la la land that scary scott kid who votes 4 him? i smell a conspiracy."

This week, we have five more aspiring Idols to watch. Who are you rooting for?

To add even more fun to this season's American Idols, 2bU! and Star World have been giving away exclusive "American Idol" premium items.

E-mail your answers to the following questions to americanidol_on_starworld@yahoo.com. The first five people who will send correct answers will win "American Idol" goodies.

Week of May 2, 2005

1. Who is one of the crowd favorites taken out recently?
2. Who was the first contestant eliminated in Season 3?
3. Who sang "Do You Love Me" during the Motown week?
4. Which contestant is known for the dance called "the bobo"?
5. Which Rust Belt city is Scott Savol from?

Catch "American Idol" on Star World every Wednesday at 4 p.m., 8 p.m., 11:30 p.m.; Thursdays at 11 a.m., 4 p.m., 8 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.; and Fridays at 2:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.

Winners for Week of April 25:

1. Sandra Macaraniag
2. Ronnie dela Cruz
3. Victoria Chan
4. Jay Anthony G. Chiu
5. Bernie Cheng

Winners will be notified on how they can claim their prize.

Slim wonder

By Kaye Victorio Bondoc
2bU! Contributor

One of the hottest gadgets in the market today is the XDA II Mini from O2 Asia, the world's smallest PDA phone

IN A WORLD where everything seems to move at an uncontrollable speed, it is but wise to ride on the latest technology in town.

There's no denying that digital technology speeds up everything we do and saves us a great deal of time and effort.

One of the hottest gadgets in the market today is the XDA II Mini from O2 Asia, a member of the MMO2 PLC Group, the leading provider of mobile communication services in Europe.

XDA II is the world's smallest PDA Phone, equipped with Windows Mobile 2003 second edition, with a speed 20 percent faster than the PDA2k. It is comparable to a "mini laptop."

The unit is conveniently small. The screen is very broad, bright and sharp, which allows you to enjoy surfing the Net.

At first, you may find the unit too complicated to manipulate. But once you become familiar with its touch buttons, you'd find it very easy to manage, and can help you perform your day-to-day activities at school or in the office.

The XDA II has an eight-way directional pad with center button that allows your hand to move freely especially when playing games. A button at the right-hand side of the taskbar allows you to rotate the screen from landscape to portrait and vice versa.

In creating messages and documents, there are various input methods to choose from, such as the phone pad, keyboard, letter recognizer and the transcriber, which reliably recognizes handwriting in cursive, print and mixed. Those who send at least 100 messages a day can see the difference between an ordinary phone pad and these touch-screen input methods.

Aside from the SMS and Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS), you can also send and receive e-mail messages from your online friends.

There's the Pocket Word and the Pocket Excel, which allow you to author and edit documents and workbooks. If you suddenly have the urge to write a poem, you won't need a piece of paper and a pen to write it down. All you have to do is go to the Notes option. Plus, you can also share your notes with friends through e-mail, infrared and synchronization with your PC.

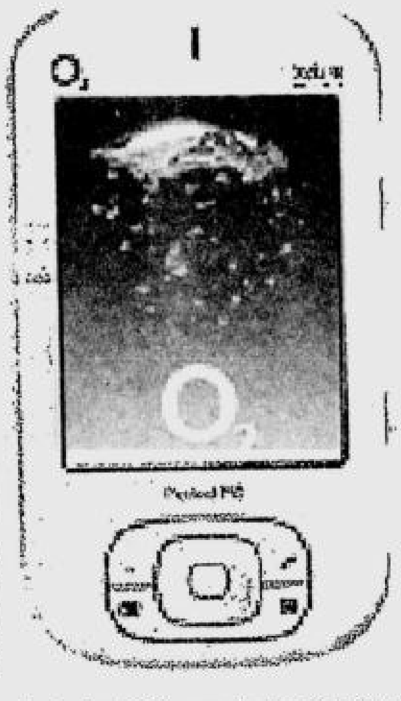
The Today Screen, similar to your PC's desktop, displays important information such as appointments and status icons. By simply tapping the information displayed on the screen, the associated program automatically opens and allows you to edit the data.

The gadget has a camera that offers 1.3-megapixel resolution. It has two main operating modes: the Camera Mode and Album mode. Camera mode provides five different capture modes: Photo Video, MMS Video, Contact Photo, and Picture Theme. Video clips can be taken with or without audio, and still images can be placed directly into "frames" if desired.

Various modes

The Album Mode allows you to view images in a variety of view modes, or play video or audio files. In addition, the Capture screen can also be adjusted to suit various environments such as Auto, Daylight, Incandescent, Flourescent and Night programs to improve image/video appearance.

Other power features include a Microsoft Windows Media Player 10 Mobile for Pocket PC, for you to play digital audio and video files with. You can play files in either Windows Media or MP3 format.



A library has been added to help you find and play audio and video files more quickly. Playlist management has been improved. Any playlist you create with the latest desktop player can be automatically copied to your Pocket PC when synchronized.

This 150g device also offers astounding sound quality. The battery can last for as long as five hours talk-time and 160 hours standby time. Take note, removing the battery and inserting a SIM card is extremely easy.

Also included in the programs list is the O2 Connect, which is designed to give access to helpful information and additional software for the device.

Most teenagers change their units for the latest model every nine months on average. But with the new XDA II Mini, which combines the convenience of having a portable pocket computer and a mobile phone in one slim line device, you can forget about changing your unit for the latest model in the market. Bet on it.

10 new Asian documentaries

NATIONAL Geographic Channel is showcasing the latest works of Asia's documentary filmmakers in ShowReal Asia—Season 2, premiering today and airing every Wednesday at 10 p.m. until July 13.

The first episode will feature Hiss of Death, which follows snake-fighter Thongkam and his nephew, seven-year-old apprentice fighter, Tak, as they prepare for Thailand's Songkran New Year Festival. In their village in northeast Thailand, men fight the King Cobra—18 feet of spring-coiled, venom-spitting, fanged death with enough poison to kill 20 people—as women dance with the snakes' fully fanged heads in their mouths and people cheat death to entertain and earn a living.

The new season, which airs globally through National Geographic Channel's network, is a result of National Geographic Channel's continuing partnership with the Singapore Economic Development Board (EDB) to cultivate Asia's filmmaking talents. Featured in this new season are 10 documentaries made by eight production companies primarily from Singapore and China.

From the shocking "Tokyo Shock Boys' Guide to Japan" to the "Megastructures: World's Busiest Port" of Singapore, and from the booming cosmetic surgery industry in China in "Trading Faces" to the bizarre "Indian Witch-Hunt", ShowReal Asia 2 features 10 vividly told, surprising and enthralling stories of Asia, revealing new insights about our region.

Under the watchful eyes of veteran producers from the National Geographic Channels International, ShowReal Asia has become the global icon of recognition for producing award-winning documentaries. The first season's "Body Snatchers of Bangkok" won an Asian Television Award for Best Documentary, while "Kungfu Dragons of Wudang" snagged a bronze medal at the New York Film Festival.

Singapore-based Bryan Smith, executive vice president of production of National Geographic Channels International, says, "ShowReal Asia is the only unique opportunity in Asia where Asian filmmakers are pushed to the limit to produce documentaries of hallmark standards of National Geographic Channel, put on the world stage for global viewing."

ShowReal Asia is the product from the multi-year collaboration between National Geographic Channels International and EDB. Launched in 2001, the US$ 11 million NGCI-EDB Documentary Production Fund over five seasons has provided the boost for Asian filmmakers to produce documentaries on a level comparable to those of established global production companies.

Winners of 2bU!'s Valentine Blowout

Abigail Tud of Marikina City
Alistair Troy Laxamana of Quezon City
Allan George Senga of Pasig City
Allan Hizon of Las Piñas City
Analiza Cruz of Laguna
Anna Christina Viola of Malabon City
April Jean Cambia of San Pedro, Laguna
Ariane Rae Ramos of Cainta Rizal
Ashley Agang of QC
Aurie Anden of San Juan, Metro Manila
Bambz de Jesus
Carol Chua-Exmundo of QC
Cath de La Cruz of Makati City
Charity Lejano of Parañaque City
Charles Ong of QC
Chel Aguilar of Manila
Cheryl Polican of Pasay City
Christina Sto. Domingo of Pasig City
Consuelo Sison of Quezon City
Corazon Rambaud of Angeles City, Pampanga
Darlene Honrado of QC
Dennis Lim of QC
Dino Laurel Lo of QC
Dominique Cimafranca of Dumaguete City
Doreen Quiaoit of San Juan Metro Manila
Edgar Allan Juane of Las Pinas City
Edged Mangahas
Edward Antonio Donato of Parañaque City
Elnel Andrew Roque of San Fernando, Pampanga
Emma Katrina Cruz
Francis Enrique of QC
Ganns Deen
Gianna Gutierrez of Tondo, Manila
Glynis Lynn Jamandre of Parañaque City
Grace Santos
Greta Cruz of Marikina City
Harold Ivan Ming of Zamboanga City
Honey Grace Olivav of Cotabato City
Ina Ocampo of QC
Ina Silverio of Bacoor, Cavite
Irene Jacobe of UST Manila
Iris Crisostomo of San Pedro, Laguna
Ivy Hayagan
Jacqueline Fernandez of Makati City
Jamie Nevalga of QC
Jay Beltran
Jeffer Ian Cas Mina of Sorsogon City
Jenny Benzon of QC
Jeremy Daliling of Pasay City
Joanna Cayabyab of QC
Joy Conopio Cruz of Paranaque City
Joyce Abano of Las Pinas City
Julianne Jane Verzola of Marikina City
Kai Salazar
Katherine Chan
Katherine Marie Tanyu of QC
Kimberly Mae Yan of QC
Kristella Hipolito of QC
Kristina Angel of QC
Kristina Daluz of Pasay City
Leah Basco of Manila
Ma. Belinda Cruz of Navotas
Ma. Christie Calata of Meycauayan, Bulacan
Maria Carmen Victor of Bocaue, Bulacan
Marian Hernandez of Parañaque City
Maribelle de los Santos of Taytay, Rizal
Mark Angelo Cacatian of Las Piñas City
Marla Miniano
Mary Sol dela Cruz of Manila
Melissa Alfonso-Cruz of Parañaque City
Michael Domingo of QC
Michelle Cu-Martinez of QC
Michelle Leelin of Mandaluyong City
Michelle Sabulao of Tacloban, Leyte
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Roma Amalia Ilustre of Camarines Norte
Romina Santayana of San Juan
Rommel Maranon of Iloilo City
Ronette Austria of Bulacan
Roselle Paras of QC
Rosie Dawe of Benguet
Tanya Jamon of QC
Vanessa Joy Pimentel of Baguio
Zhandra Tam of Manila

Winners may claim their prizes from the Philippine Daily Inquirer office, Chino Roces Ave. corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati, on Sunday, May 8, from 1-6 p.m. For inquiries, call 0915400079 and 09179056173. Look for Pam Pastor.

Prizes are awarded based on effort. Winners may be given prizes other than what they asked for.

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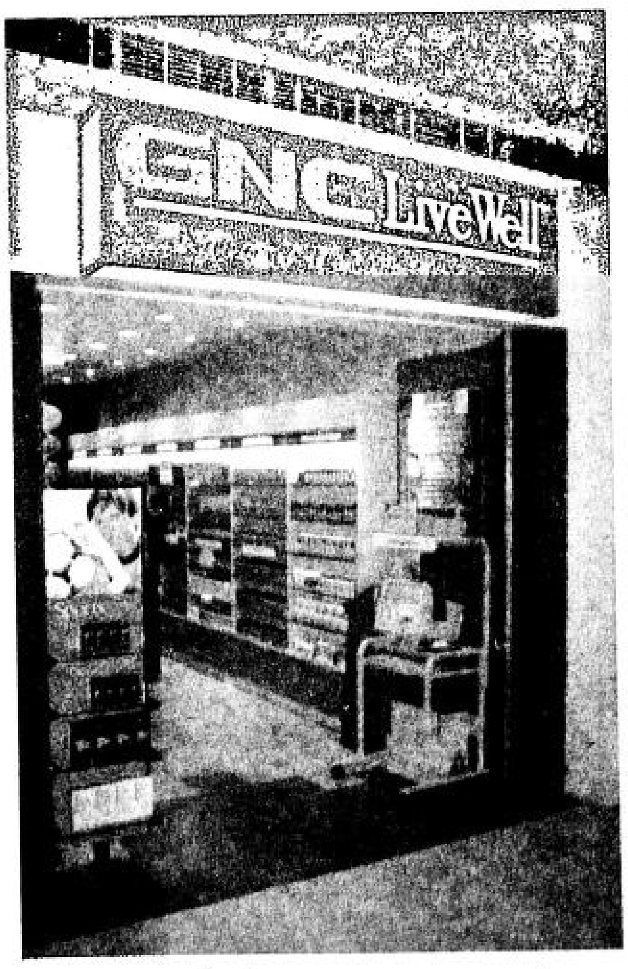

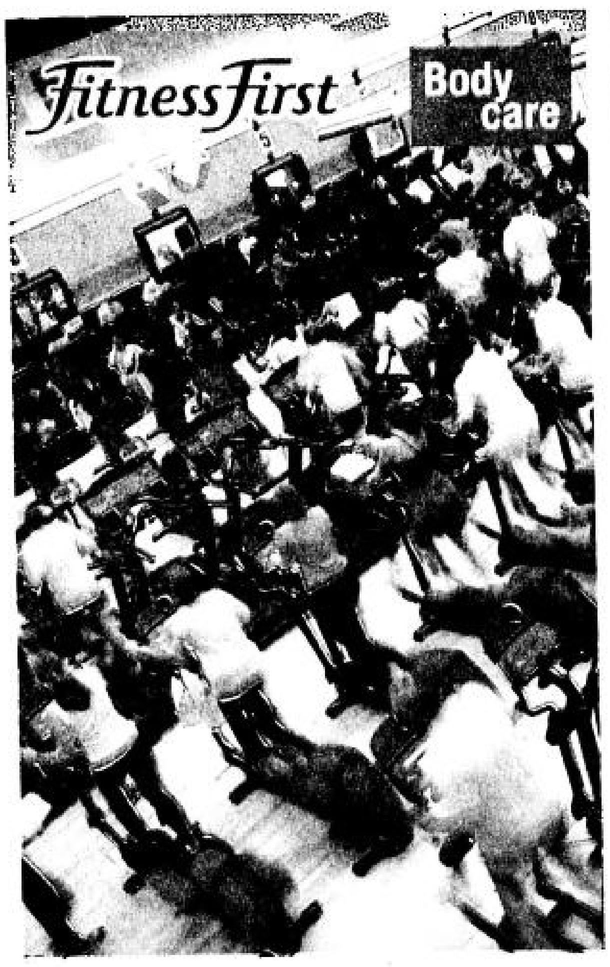

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- Get an **extra night free** when you buy two PAL destination packages to Kuala Lumpur and Cebu from May 1 to June 30, 2005.
- **15% OFF** on regular items, **10% OFF** on consigned items (excluding items on sale or price control) at selected Toby's stores** until June 30, 2005.
- **Walved joining fee** with a **free** Starter Pack at all Fitness First centers, **50% OFF** on joining fee at Fitness First Plus center, and **25% OFF** on Body Care treatments and massages (except on existing promos and packages). Valid until June 30, 2005.
- **25% OFF** on selected products at all GNC stores* until June 27, 2005.

Promo period from April 15-June 30, 2005. See tent cards for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0958, Series of 2005.

* Except for the following GNC branches: The Landmark, Makati and The Atrium, Iloilo.

**Available at the following stores: Toby's Metro Manila branches (except Alabang Town Center, Festival Mall, SM Southmall and Greenhills), SM branches (Bacolod, Baguio, Cebu, and Marilao-Bulacan) and Robinson's Iloilo.

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